

GEAR & GADGETS



DAVE URBAN

Tech Etiquette Dos and Don'ts

As our technology evolves, so too do the rules that govern us. Here, 21 new tips to internalize.

BY ALEX SCHMIDT

1 **Whether you wanted** to fit in or stand out in high school—be the influenced or the influencer—adhering to social norms was key to navigating and surviving the experience. The same applies to new technology today, where a failure to understand the shifting landscape (which recent studies suggest is still dictated by teen girls, somehow) can quickly make you a pariah. Fear not, we have you covered. Even as the tech world continues to churn out exciting devices amid the chaos and crisis of 2020, these etiquette guidelines will keep you on the cutting edge of your class, helping you improve and update your behavior—or else.

2 **Once you and your roommates** acquire separate homes, you can only share streaming accounts for a grace period of one year.

3 **If that HBO Max password** belongs to an ex, however, the grace period shrinks to one month. Flout this rule and you must get back together.

4 **Roughly one-third** of U.S. adults have gone looking for love on dating apps, according to Pew Research. While you needn't view your Hinge, Bumble or Tinder profile with shame, it is still verboten to pose in a mirror or while holding a fish.

5 **At least one of your dating profile pictures** should depict you with a recent haircut holding up a newspaper—its date clearly visible.

6 **We're pretty certain** that watching a video on your smartphone, at full volume, without headphones, violates the Geneva Convention. If not, start revisiting, Geneva.

7 **Avoid FaceTime PDA** whether bantering "innocently" or plotting dinner plans. Restrict romantic video calls to your home or hotel rooms.

8 **Absolutely do not kiss the camera.**

9 **You needn't wave goodbye** at the end of a Zoom call. But if someone initiates a wave, reciprocate in kind. Your wrists can rest later.

10 **No party needs to make up a good reason** to end a phone call. Elaborate and trite farewells are vestigial Landline-Era nonsense.

11 **You're allowed to live-tweet a TV show or movie** (sans spoilers). You're no longer allowed to live-tweet strangers' behavior as if they're a TV show.

12 **Use video doorbells** to ward off porch pirates and document cute animals that wandered into your yard—not to spy on your only mildly sinful neighbors.

13 **Don't fret if you accidentally steal** from the self-checkout. Stores budget for this so-called "shrinkage" and it's arguably their fault for making you do the job.

14 **However, if a human is assisting you** at checkout, remove your headphones—no exceptions. If the store can keep its toilet paper stocked, you can pause your podcast.

15 **Don't just write back a curt "seen it"** when a friend sends you a popular meme. Just act like he or she discovered it first. It's the most harmless possible version of lying.

16 **The world will never tire of cute dogs or pretty sunsets** with cute dogs in the foreground. Give us all you've got.

17 **Regardless of what your Gen-Z niece says,** there's no age-limit for joining TikTok. But there is a limit on spastic dance moves.

18 **Never ask a bartender to charge your phone.** He has to remember more than 100 drink recipes. You can remember to juice your

phone before heading out the door.

19 **You're under no obligation to match the enthusiasm** someone else has for using emojis. Just remember that ending texts with a period is an act of malice.

20 **No phones at the dinner table.** But you may designate a table captain to keep one close by in case no one can remember the name of that guy from that movie.

21 **If you're one of the 41.8 million Americans** who bought into "smart home" tech, teach guests how to control the lights before that urgent 1 a.m. quest for the bathroom.

22 **If you've ever met anyone named Alexa,** you're not allowed to own an Amazon Echo. If you've ever met someone named Google, the Cyborg Era has begun.



SERGE BLOCH

5 QUESTIONS

For Whom the Dryer Tolls

Smart new appliances are blasting cheery tunes for attention. What's behind this odd phenomenon?

1 **Why is my appliance serenading me?** It's a form of branding. "The little tunes appliances have started spitting out these days are known as audio logos," explained James Kellaris, a composer, musician and professor of marketing at the University of Cincinnati, where he studies sonic branding. Samsung's Electric Dryer (\$599, samsung.com) finishes a tumble cycle with 30 seconds of Schubert's "Die Forelle," while LG's QuadWash plays a delightful 10-second ditty when the dishes are done.

2 **How exactly does an appliance play music?** In many cases, the same sort of buzzer that roused you to check your laundry in the 1980s now plays a more complicated collection of beeps to craft a melody. In newer machines, however, said Richard Hughes, a principal designer in advanced user experience at Whirlpool, engineers have added chips akin to those found in smartphones to deliver higher-quality audio. Example: His brand's Smart All-In-One Washer & Dryer (\$1,699, whirlpool.com) performs an original tune that includes sounds of fingertips drumming on denim.

3 **What am I getting out of this?** The supposedly valuable ability to heed the call of a specific device among the many chiming, dinging and pinging for your attention. "An audio logo can cut through the clutter of multiple devices and appliances calling out to us," said Mr. Kellaris. Some inanimate devices aspire to have entire melodic conversations with us, added Mr. Hughes: The musical notification you hear when KitchenAid's Smart Oven+ (\$3,299, kitchenaid.com) is preheated differs from the one you hear when your cook time is up, keeping you informed even as you complete other tasks around the home.

4 **But what's the company getting out of it?** Customer allegiance, theoretically. "These sounds ensure that our products are easily identifiable with the Samsung brand," said Shane Higby, vice president of home appliance product marketing for the company. Appliance makers view sonic branding as a low-cost investment that inspires loyalty, even at the risk of irritation. "An audio logo is a reminder that the brand is there to serve consumers—sort of a free ad," said Mr. Kellaris. Sounds, he believes, can also convey certain attributes of a machine: sturdiness, fun, elegance.

5 **Ok, but how do I turn the damn thing off?** Maybe you're disinclined to add a jingle seemingly inspired by the English folk tune "The Lincolnshire Poacher" to the cacophony of the phones, TVs, smart homes and other constantly pinging appliances invading your home. Find instructions for how to turn off each appliance's electronic melodies in the user manual if you didn't already toss it, or otherwise check YouTube. Then again, having your child learn Schubert from the dryer could save you a bundle on private lessons.

—Ashley Mateo



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How to Bloom on Zoom

A quick guide to acting professional on video calls

ZOOM IS a blessing and a curse. The ubiquitous virtual meeting place keeps us close to important people in our lives but never lets us truly escape the office. And it's quickly forced us to develop new etiquette.

First, always know where your camera is pointed. This lets you conceal your new double chin and helps everyone forget you swore off wearing pants in March. Next, master muting. If you see people tearfully flailing on screen, assume they're trying to get you to unmute. Conversely, if you're bad-mouthing your boss with the mic on, your resume may need updating.

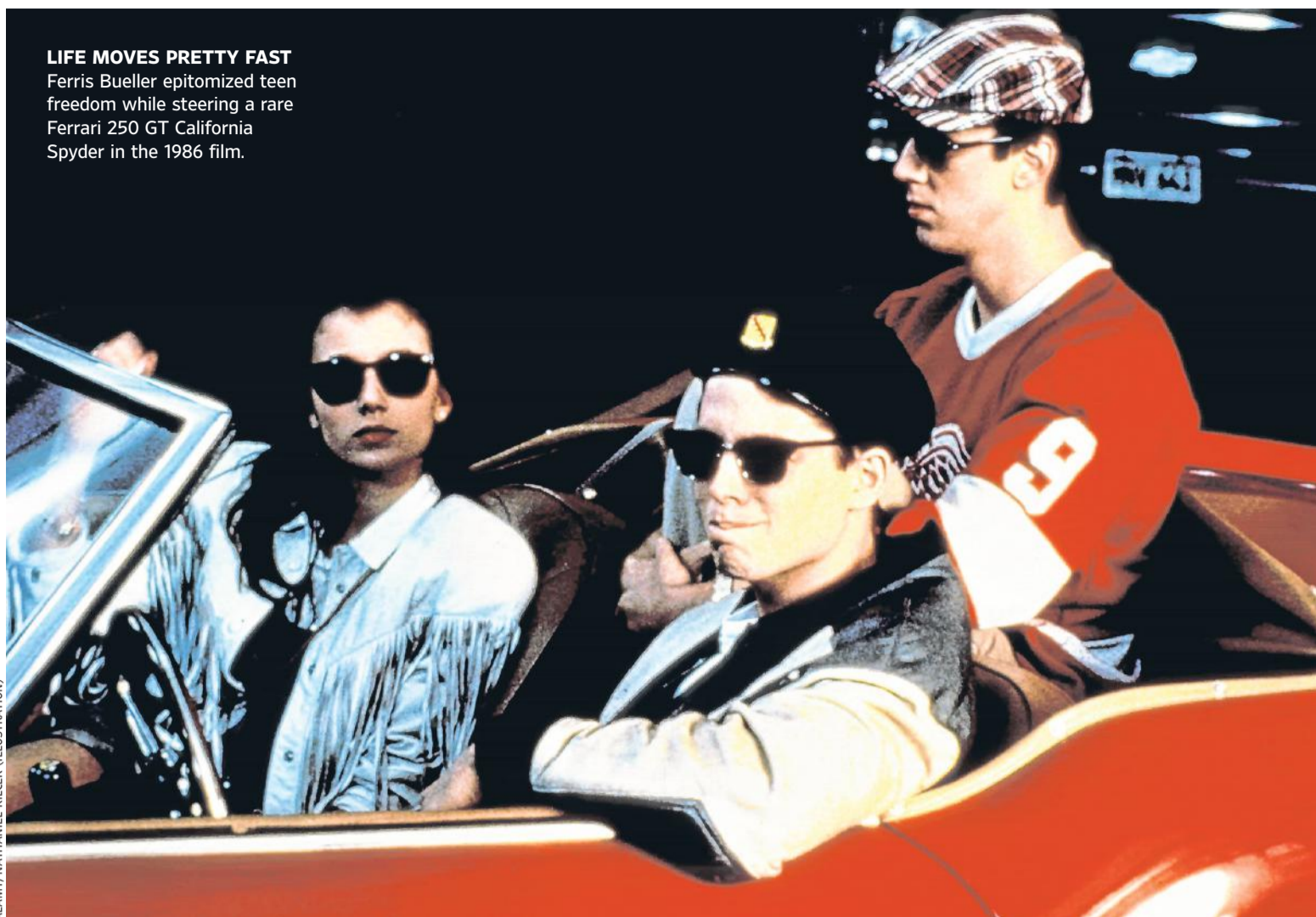
Also, no eating. It's hard to pay attention to last month's sales figures while watching someone chow down. That said, a well-timed sip of coffee can perfectly punctuate your point.

If you're multitasking, keep your phone below the desktop screen and remember that even if you clicked over to shop in a new tab, the camera still sees all.

Lastly, as when attending a party, never be the first to arrive nor the last to leave. And when it's over, shoot the host a quick note of thanks. Especially if you called him a naive twit while your mic was hot.

—Matthew Kitchen

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LIFE MOVES PRETTY FAST
Ferris Bueller epitomized teen freedom while steering a rare Ferrari 250 GT California Spyder in the 1986 film.

ALAMY; NATHANIEL KILGER (ILLUSTRATION)

How to Raise a Driven Teenager

An array of innovative features now makes it easier to control young drivers' reckless impulses. But is surveillance tech robbing them of the freedom previous generations felt behind the wheel?

By MATTHEW KRONBERG

ON THE PROUD DAY in 1989 when Stacie Bloom turned 15 and got her learner's permit, her father took her to an empty parking lot and let her loose piloting his ancient Buick. "It didn't have AC. It barely had power steering," she recalled. "You really had to pay attention. You really needed to be in control."

GenX-ers like Ms. Bloom were arguably the last generation of teens who were truly free when they pulled out of their driveways. Her parents, she said, might never know if she were going 60 mph when the limit was 45. "I would call and check in, but I could say I was one place, and be somewhere else—they'd have no idea.... Not that I would do that."

For Ms. Bloom's newly licensed 17-year-old daughter, Callie, disappearing isn't an option. While cars are no longer the "suicide machines" of Springsteen lore, they're no longer portals to freedom either. Callie's 2019 Hyundai Kona is equipped with a panoply of features via Hyundai's subscription-based Blue Link app that includes speed and curfew alerts, as well as geofencing, which can ping Ms. Bloom if Callie crosses a specified GPS boundary.

If you've bought a car in the past few years there's a fair chance yours has similar technology built in. There is also a fair chance, according to two studies from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety,



LOOK OUT BELOW / WHICH TYPE OF HELICOPTER PARENT ARE YOU?

LEVEL I
Cruise Control

Because safety features are often buried in sub-menus that are difficult to find, Volvo has made their Care Key—standard with all autos starting with the 2021 model year—unmissable. Mildly

anxious parents can program the traffic-cone-orange key fob to limit a vehicle's top speed from 31 to 112 mph, the new top speed for all Volvos.

LEVEL II
Guardian Angel

Hyundai's subscription-

ping the car's owner if it steers outside of predetermined boundaries.

LEVEL III
Backseat Driver

While the Life360 smartphone app can't stop your teen from making calls or speeding, it can let you—keeper of the keys—know if, when and where he did it. It will also report sudden stops and rapid acceleration, and can detect if the driver got into an accident. And depending on the subscription plan, the app can automatically call for help.

LEVEL IV
Right Up In Their Grille

GM's Teen Driver settings offer a wide range of tools to limit what a high-schooler can do behind the wheel, and track what she manages to get away with—which is nothing until seat belts are securely fastened. You can set a maximum volume for the sound system, maximum speed for the car and in some cases limit the acceleration rate. It even saves a pin-protected "report card" of their outings.

that you don't know about it. Ms. Bloom didn't. The first study, from 2018, found that more than a third of parents who owned a Ford with a MyKey system were unaware their car had a feature that can limit a driver's top speed and radio volume.

In May, a broader follow-up study found that info on teen-safety features tends to be located deep in car makers' websites, and that during the buying process, most salespeople only bring these features up if asked about them directly.

A range of GM vehicles include 'Teen Driver Technology,' which even generates regular report cards.

A range of GM vehicles include "Teen Driver Technology," which is triggered by the specific car key you assign your teen. The feature generates a pin-protected "report card" that tallies the times that traction control and forward collision avoidance braking were employed and logs the top speed during each ride. It also requires that seat belts be fastened for the vehicle to move or the radio to work and lets you cap the driver's speed. If you think your favorite sophomore resents you now, toss him a key to your Corvette without telling him that alerts will sound when he crosses 45 mph.

All new Mercedes vehicles integrate the Mercedes me connect app, which like Blue Link offers geofencing and speed alerts. Meanwhile, starting with the 2021 model year, Volvo has made standard its Care Key—a bright orange fob that can be coded to limit the car's top speed to anything from 31 mph to 112 mph.

If your teen is stuck driving a faded Dodge Neon, you can still track her via Life360, an app that provides real time info about a user's whereabouts. Ms. Bloom can peek in any time to track Callie's pace and progress and get alerts when she arrives at dance class.

However, while tech has fully permeated driving, learning to drive is still largely a Luddite affair for a teen. At Dudley's Driving Center Inc. in Newport News, Va., "I still teach to look over your shoulder," when backing up, said Thomas Dudley, Sr. "Don't depend on the cameras."

That's the attitude Gigi Gatson, a clinical laboratory scientist in Atlanta, takes with her son Noah when he practices in her 2018 Infiniti G70 "I want him to rely on his vision and his instinct of where other cars are, looking for blind spots and not trusting the car's camera to do the work." It's common sense backed by research; a December 2019 study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that tech like lane-keep assist and adaptive cruise control can make drivers less attentive.

But while kids chafe against strictures and surveillance, as always, some have reached a point of detente. "I love my car," said Callie. "I can always trust it. And if I needed help, I know my mom knows where I am anyway."

Dan Neil is off this week. Rumble Seat will return in next week's issue.

Our Eyes Have Had It!

Too much screen-staring is straining pupils everywhere. A few fixes

LIFE HAS GONE almost entirely virtual. Since lockdown started, people who used to see their overly chatty co-workers IRL spend an average of 9.5 hours a day looking at laptops and smartphones, reports a survey conducted by OnePoll. It takes just two consecutive hours of staring at pixelated Zoom faces or scrolling Excel data to put you at risk for eyestrain and dryness, blurred vision and headaches, according to the American Optometric Association.

That's because, like Pilates or making elaborate lattes, vision takes effort. Tiny eye muscles "are no different from muscles in arms or legs," said Scott P. Drexler, O.D., an assistant professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "When you overuse them, they get fatigued and hurt."

Step one: Adjust the way you engage with devices. "Your phone should always be

a foot from your face; your laptop about two feet away," said Jamie Mitchell, M.D., a neuro-ophthalmologist at Manhattan Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital. Keep screens 3 to 4 inches below your sight line, added Dr. Drexler; looking slightly downward is easier on the eyes. A tilted laptop stand, like the Rain Design iLevel2 (\$60, adorama.com), lets you stick to those guidelines without sacrificing ergonomics.

Tweaking your environment can make a difference, too. Most WFH professionals have escaped the harsh lighting of offices—whose fluorescents and LEDs can overtax eyes with subtle flickering and high wattage—but you can still take steps when it comes to luminescence. Swap standard bulbs for ones like Philips EyeComfort LED lights (from \$9/two-pack, philips.com) that don't give off glare or emit high-energy blue-light wavelengths.

That villainous blue light contributes most to focusing problems, said Dr. Drexler. It also hinders production of melatonin, the hormone that regulates your body's sleep-wake cycle. The less shut-eye you get, the less respite for your eyes, said Dr. Mitchell.

Attachable anti-glare filters, like EyeJust's light-blocking screens (from \$35, eye-just.com), act as a buffer against blue light, and stop ambient light from reflecting off your computer. Blue-light-blocking glasses, like Roka's ZX-2 lenses (from \$175, roka.com) can nix up to 42% of harmful wavelengths. For fashion-conscious Zoomers, there's even Tom Ford pairs (from \$360, tomford.com).

Despite these tips, doctors still recommend the 20/20/20 rule: Every 20 minutes, take 20 seconds to look 20 feet away. That's enough time to check on the kids before your next dial-in. —Ashley Mateo



FERNANDO COBELO