

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFT ETIQUETTE

by Carolann Philips

As spaces get smaller and buildings get taller, the Elevator or Lift has become part and parcel of our everyday routine. Many of us prefer to have the Lift all to ourselves. However, most times, we share this small cramped space with others. It is therefore useful to know some unwritten etiquette rules on the usage of Lifts.

In busy buildings, where the Lift is used frequently, it is courteous to use the stairs rather than the Lift to travel between one or two floors if physically able to do so. Time is money in business. Calling a busy Lift to the ground floor and getting off on the first floor wastes precious time and creates a poor impression. Pushing the 'call' button and leaving if the Lift does not come right away is rude. People traveling inside get stopped on a floor that does not have anyone waiting to get on. Proper decorum directs a person to allow those who want to leave the Lift to do so first before getting on. Wait to one side without crowding around, blocking the exit pathway, or standing close to the doors. This creates enough space to allow the people getting off the Lift to walk away comfortably. Let all of the people waiting to board prior to you get on first. If there is still room, feel free to move in. Otherwise take a step back and wait for the next one. It is discourteous to rush towards a closing Lift door or stick an arm between the doors to keep it from closing if there are passengers already in. If you are one of many inside and happen to see someone rushing towards the door, it is best to let the doors close since there are more people inside waiting. However, if you are alone, it is courteous to press the 'open' button and allow the person to board. Punching the 'close' button several times does not

make the Lift doors close any faster. Push the button once and allow the Lift to do its job. Traveling with strangers in confined spaces can be difficult. Always stand directly facing the Lift doors. Do not stand sideways or face other passengers. The proper place to gaze is forward or upward towards the lights which indicate the floor. Staring at other passengers is rude. Most Lift conversations should be kept to minimum and be of a very general nature. Using a mobile phone in an occupied Lift is bad manners. If you cannot reach the control buttons, politely ask the person standing nearest the buttons to do so. If you are the person standing nearest and others cannot reach them, politely ask them which floor they are going to. The interior of an elevator car is a small space and odours travel quickly. A rule that would most apply at this point, although should be attended to earlier is to reduce or preferably eliminate body odour. For the same reason, food should not be consumed aboard the elevator. Wait and use an empty Lift carriage if you are unwell or coughing and sneezing uncontrollably. Ensure that the floor the elevator stops on is yours. Leaving the Lift on an undesired floor and then darting back inconveniences others and makes you look silly. Those standing next to the door get off first. The only time there is door-holding etiquette is when someone is hosting or guiding someone else. Etiquette is common sense and 'ladies first' does not apply in all situations. However, if a person is gentlemanly enough to hold the door for a lady or give up his place, a lady should politely accept rather than decline and offend him.

After spending a good deal of time in Lifts for several years, it has occurred to me that Lift etiquette is something that must be learned in order to ensure everybody's ride is a pleasurable experience.

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Carolann has had the pleasure of delivering programs to a diverse clientele; from major airlines, leading banks, embassies, and reputed business houses to the modeling & fashion industry and royalty within the GCC. She is also a columnist for the 'Thursday' magazine, a local publication.