

The Guest-Host Relationship

Written by LA Plume

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:25



Dear L. A. Plume,

It's that time of year again here - when my extended family wants to come visit and go to the beach. I'm really not all that keen on having house guests on the best of days because I'm a bit of a curmudgeon and I like my routine. Tell me, Ms. Plume, is it really necessary for me to make the beds, stock the refrigerator with all sorts of stuff they like but I don't eat, prepare meals, do the dishes, and then have to strip all the beds, wash the towels and linens, and take the trash away, because I'm the closest thing they have to a free hotel? Or is it okay to let them share in some of the above chores?

Frank(ly) Tired of Freeloaders at Fripp

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Dear Frank,

Give it a try and see how it goes. I maintain there is a difference between entertaining guests you have specifically invited, and those who want a place to stay for their convenience. Leave clean sheets folded on the guest beds and see if they actually put them on the beds, do the same with a set of towels for each person and hope they don't raid the entire linen closet. Buy enough food basics so they will have what they like when they arrive and let them go to the store and refill when necessary. I don't think there is anything wrong with having a posted or printed set of "House Rules" so guests know what to expect. These can include:

1. what to do with their linens when they leave - put in the washing machine, leave on the bed, etc.
2. "quiet hours" i.e. 4 - 6 is reading, napping, or amusing yourself quietly, time.
3. breakfast will be served at 0:00 or, coffee is in the canister - please help yourself.
4. "summer rules" i.e. the host will fix your first cocktail, after that you are on your own and must also serve the host
5. a "house/host gift" wish list; suggestions for this are casual items like a new John Deere riding mower, a fully stocked wine refrigerator, or whatever might suit your fancy. (Consider what it might cost them to stay in a nice hotel with restaurant meals and use that as a cost basis for your gift wish list.)

If you are embracing this concept, leave a comment card on their night table (or next to their pillow chocolates because we must never forego all of the nice amenities), and see how they respond. Expect to not know the true results of your experiment until next summer if they ask to

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come back.

L. A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

Friends invited us to a pool party last weekend. We were trying to be good guests so we took a case of beer as a sort of house gift, and also 'cause we wanted to drink it. They got all huffy when they saw it was bottles and not cans; they wouldn't let us drink it while we were in the pool and gave us some other beer that was in cans. Wasn't that rude, after we went to the trouble to bring what we liked?

B.B.

Dear B.B.,

Bless your heart! Have you ever played the drinking game where you tried to find broken pieces of glass under water? The best way is when you step on them and cut your foot. Clearly this comes as a surprise to you, or your invitations to pool parties have been few and far between, but generally people don't use glass near pools.

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L. A. Plume

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