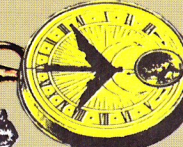


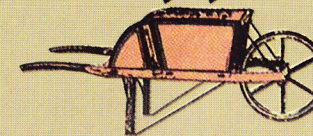
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(50.80 cm) apart. Now determine exactly where you want the downspout to attach to the gutter. Using the connector as a template, mark where you want the connector to go. Cut out the area with tinsnips, then rivet or screw in the connector.

You are now ready to attach the gutter to the soffit, or roof edge. Phew! You'll put a screw through each of the hangers. Remember that rainwater should drain towards the connector (and thus into the downspout and not...well, you know), so don't hang your gutter perfectly level. Angle it down slightly on the side with the connector. In general, install the gutters so there is a drop of about one-16th of an inch (.16 cm) for each foot (30.5 cm) of length of guttering. If your gutter runs more than 35 feet (10.7 m), though, it should slant in each direction from the center, using the same formula. To test your gutter installation thus far, pour water into the gutter and observe the flow carefully. If it runs off properly without leaving telltale pools of water in the gutter, the gutter is set properly. Should there be low spots, the water will sit stubbornly in the gutter—happily helping you locate the trouble spots, which you can now rectify by adjusting the slant.

#### THE DOWNSPOUT

Now that your gutter is attached to the roof or soffit, and no water is pooling within it, you're solidly in the home stretch. It's time to put the downspout together. There are three main steps to connecting downspouts: Cut the pieces to the proper length; fit them together; and attach the pieces with rivets or screws. To cut the lengths of downspout, use a hacksaw. Be careful to support your downspout

material as you cut it to avoid scratching the painted surface (there's that "cut on a stable surface" advice again!). To ensure that one end of the downspout will fit inside the end of another, you may have to crimp the ends inward, as you did with the gutter end caps (and at which you are expert now!).

If you are using rivets, you will have to pre-drill the holes for them. If using self-tapping screws, simply insert 2-3 screws at every connection.

Once gutters and downspouts are installed, apply a seam sealer to all the areas where two pieces of aluminum join together. Be sure to apply the sealer around the gutter/downspout connector, and at each end cap. You may need some metallic paint to match your gutters and downspouts for touch-ups (most of us do), so add the paint to your list of materials. You can always keep it for future touchups in the unlikely event it's not needed right away.

Lastly, keeping in mind the importance of proper drainage, use splashblocks to insure that water is not collecting around the foundation of your house. A splashblock is a wide-ish plastic or concrete surface installed under a downspout to direct water away from the house.

#### PROTECT FROM DEBRIS

Gutter shields allow water drainage while lessening the accumulation of leaves, etc., in the gutters. The shields usually slide under the shingles or tiles at the edge of your roof. After you've installed the shield, it is held in place with a clip.

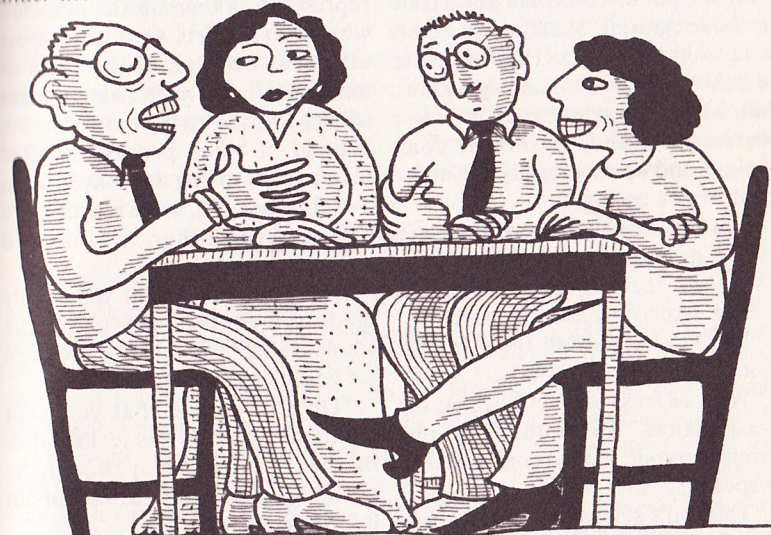
Gutters, downspouts, and splashblocks can help keep your basement dry, and keep your foundation (and your spirits) from sagging. α

## Stealthy Table Manners

By Julie Wittes Schiack

Illustration by Margaret Scott

*Last night, as my non-lawyer husband Mark happily lectured to our two lawyer friends about the dubious legal foundation of presidential signing statements, I wished, not for the first time, that we'd actually developed an under-the-table kick code. For example, four short kicks = pontificating.*



Now don't get me wrong—I love my husband. I even love the excitability in social situations that sometimes causes him to talk at a greater length than I might like with greater authority than I may feel is warranted to people who may be a little too polite for their own good. But his timing, and his alertness to certain well-established (if implicit) etiquette, sometimes leaves something to be desired.

Last night, we had just been ushered to our table, hadn't yet studied the menu, hadn't even ordered wine or decided if we were going to have appetizers. In short, we hadn't begun to dispense with the business of eating out, and I've always believed—no, *known* in the very core

of my polite Canadian being—that, until the logistics of ordering the meal are handled, restaurant conversation should be limited to small talk.

I tried a few subtle methods to signal this to him, including fanning myself with the menu and crossing my hands in a subtle "time-out" signal low on the table, to no avail. No, it was only when our old college friend Barbara threw her hand up to stop the verbal traffic and clearly, with her best mommy voice, said, "Let's order first, then talk," that we were able to get back on procedural track. Barbara had just started a new job after taking several years off to be at home with her daughter, so once the wine came, I asked about her first week back at work. But early



in her response, she made some reference that reminded Mark of an article he'd read, sending him off on a conversational detour. Doggedly, I reeled the dialogue back with another question to Barbara about her feelings as a first-time working mother.

At that point, if we'd had a kick code for *Interrogating*, Mark would surely have fired it my way. That's because he believes I ask too many questions; that, in my quest to be an attentive hostess or friend, my dinner companions end up more grilled than the meal we are eating.

"I'm just displaying my interest in getting to know them," I mildly protest when this objection is raised. "People like to talk about themselves."

"No, you're putting them on the spot," Mark firmly answers.

"Well, at least I'm not hogging the conversation," I counter. "I'm just giving everyone in the room a chance to speak."

"This isn't school," Mark retorts. "We don't need to take turns. We're all grown-ups here. If someone has something to say, they can say it. I'm not stopping them."

"Well, not everyone is as comfortable cutting other people off as you are," I say acidly. "We're not all..."

"Yeah, yeah, we're not all from New York. I know."

Three short kicks for *Interrupting* would ultimately have been a much healthier exchange.

I know this tension isn't unique to us. Most of my women friends will, at some point, offer an eye-rolling apology after the fact for some aspect of their husband's behavior—whether he'd talked too much, talked too little, or talked about subjects of interest only to him, such as his recent colon-

oscopy, industrial robotics, or Eddie Van Halen's custom guitar...and I'm quite sure the same would be true of my husband's friends.

When it comes to our children, none of us have any problem explicitly coaching, training, or reprimanding them in the moment, when our efforts would be most effective. But one of the rules of marital etiquette is that neither spouse has the right to offer it. So, instead of being proactive ("Remember not to hog the conversation tonight, honey!"), we're reactive. We offer each other unsolicited critiques.

"Do you realize that you barely made eye contact with Gerry the whole night?" I asked helpfully when we got home last night.

"Do you realize that you kept asking him how he was feeling after his heart thing, even though he obviously didn't want to talk about it," Mark answered.

Of course, not every debrief goes this way. For every night like last night, there is a drive-home conversation with a distinctly more collaborative feel.

"Geez, Astrid seemed pretty wound up," I might offer.

"You think? Just because she felt the need to mention her fellowship and Michael's depression in every other sentence she uttered?" Mark would agree.

Yes, we've had our share of those "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" dinners with acquaintances or friends whose relationship is imploding—or simply the ones whose eagerness to talk to someone other than each other overwhelms the evening.

"You know how cheap Paul is," a school acquaintance once began over a parents' potluck dinner in the gym. Actually, we didn't. "Well, yesterday he surprised even me. The man came home with ten of those two-dozen-egg cartons because they were fifty percent off. That's 240 eggs!"

"A lot of eggs," Mark agreed.

"There's no law against freezing eggs," Paul protested. "Haven't you ever heard of people freezing eggs," he implored me.

"Only to have future babies," I an-

swered, winning a satisfied nod from his wife. "But that doesn't mean it can't be done. I'm sure it can," I continued, placating Paul. "Neither of us is really an expert when it comes to eggs," Mark offered diplomatically, looking directly at me with a straight face and laughing eyes.

In that moment I would have reached out to my husband barefoot if I could. I would have curled his toes under the table with mine. One long embrace equals *Beloved*; two short wiggles equals *Buddy*. □

## BANNED WORD LIST

Wordsmiths at Lake Superior State University—located in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, along the U.S./Canada international border—annually (and arbitrarily) decide from innumerable entries from around the world on a tongue-in-cheek Banishment List. The university's List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness has been published on New Year's Day every year since 1976.

The word *czars* in 2010 *unfriended* (when they banned *using friend as a verb*) several words and phrases and declared them *shovel-ready* (the top choice) for inclusion on the list. "The list this year is a *teachable moment* conducted free of *tweets* and all of its variations: *tweetaholic*, *retweet*, *twitterhead*, *twitterature*, and *twittersphere*," said a Word Banishment spokesman who was *chillaxin* for the holidays. "*In these economic times* purging our language of *toxic assets* is a *stimulus* effort that's *too big to fail*."

Listmakers voted to ban *app* (short for application), as well as *sexting*, *bromance*, and *transparent/transparency*. Past year's banished words and phrases include: *i-Anything*; *24/7*; *you go, girl*; *chill out*; *cyber*; *downsizing*; *e-Anything*; and *bling/bling-bling*. By popular demand, *been there, done that* has been banned in three separate years, as has *basically*. Also voted out: *wordsmith* (oops!); *at this point in time*; "*Estates*" in the names for mobile home parks; *it's all good*, and *let's do lunch*.

For future lists, wordsmiths have their eye on Obama-prefixed or Obama-rooted constructions such as these (compiled by the Oxford Dictionary): *Obamanomics*; *Obamanation*; *Obamafication*; *Obamacare*; *Obamalicious*; and *Obamaland*...to which the university says "*Obamanough* already."

*The age of your children is a key factor in how quickly you are served in a restaurant. We once had a waiter in Canada who said, "Could I get you your check?" and we answered, "How about the menu first?"* —Erma Bombeck

*Fashions, after all, are only induced epidemics.* —George Bernard Shaw