

27 Ways to Be a Modern Man

Being a modern man today is no different than it was a century ago. It's all about adhering to principle. Sure, fashion, technology and architecture change over time, as do standards of etiquette, not to mention ways of carrying oneself in the public sphere. But the modern man will take the bits from the past that strike him as relevant and blend them with the stuff of today.

1. When the modern man buys shoes for his spouse, he doesn't have to ask her sister (who always gives him shit for not being more involved in her personal affairs, oh my god Miranda, he has a busy life. He's always stressed. When he wakes up in the morning, all he looks forward to is going back to sleep at night. When his boss walks into his office, he feels bloody bile rising in his throat, always believing this is the day that they'll figure out he's just faking his competency, something he's believed since he was twelve and his father walked out on his mother, and she told him that daddy left because he was a disappointment.) for the size. And he knows which brands run big or small (because she'll never let him forget about the time that the flats he bought her for Valentine's day gave her a huge blister on the day of her important client meeting).
2. The modern man never lets other people know when his confidence has sunk. He acts as if everything is going swimmingly until it is. If he pretends for long enough, things have to get better. They just have to. They can't go on like this, that's for goddamn sure.
3. The modern man is considerate. At the movie theater, he won't munch down a mouthful of popcorn during a quiet moment. He waits for some ruckus. Because he knows that he chews so loudly that the cruel fifth-graders at his school made fun of him, and forced him to eat underneath the playground

during lunch because of the “troll noises” coming out of his mouth. His wife comments on his chewing sometimes. He’s never told her about it, so he knows that she doesn’t mean to reopen old wounds. But it still hurts.

4. The modern man doesn’t cut the fatty or charred bits off his fillet. Every bite of steak is a privilege, and it all goes down the hatch. He ignores the glare from his wife, and the wide eyes of the other patrons at the Capital Grille while he savagely rips at the gristle-covered bone of his t-bone steak. He eats like a wild-eyed neanderthal fattening himself up for a long winter. These cretins just don’t know how to be a modern man, he thinks, as he lays down the bone, sated at last. His wife stares into the middle distance now. She pretends that she’s somewhere else.
5. The modern man won’t blow 10 minutes of his life looking for the best parking spot. He find a reasonable one and puts his car between the lines, because Linda won’t let him live down the time that he circled the lot for twenty minutes until he finally found a spot and some asshole in a tiny Fiat pulled into it in front of him even though he CLEARLY HAD HIS TURN SIGNAL ON AND WAS ABOUT TO PULL IN, and he honked at Fiat Guy until he got out of the car, but Fiat Guy was actually pretty big and scary looking, so he had to park at the McDonalds fifteen minutes away, and they missed the first act of Macbeth, (which was her idea anyway. The modern man would have been fine with staying home and watching Band of Brothers again) and she was so mad at the modern man that they did not speak to each other until the next morning.
6. Before the modern man heads off to bed, he makes sure his spouse’s phone and his kids’ electronic devices are charging for the night. To the modern man, living one moment without these devices is tantamount to death, a lifetime floating in a void so deep that after a while he forgets even he is, his soul sublimating into the darkness, eventually unwanted and unmissed.

7. The modern man buys only regular colas, like Coke or Dr. Pepper. If you walk into his house looking for a Mountain Dew, he'll show you the door. Mountain Dew is for poor methheads and construction workers, according to your lovely wife Linda. He's fine with not having it in the house. He didn't like it that much anyway. It doesn't remind him of the times before he was saddled with a mortgage and children, when his best friend Paul came over with a twelve-pack of Dew and two bags of Doritos, neither of which would survive this all-night Halo 3 session, a night which, on his deathbed, the modern man would recall as the single happiest night of his life. It's not that good anyway. It's not classic, like those other sugar-water drinks. It's fine.
8. The modern man uses the proper names for things. For example, he'll say "helicopter," not "chopper" like some gauche simpleton. Linda's father called him a "gauche simpleton" one night when he said "GET TO DA CHOPPA" in his best attempt Arnold Schwarzenegger voice, after he drank seven Cuba Libres at his father-in-law's country club, where he is no longer invited to, despite the fact that he's given Linda everything, that he loves her with all of his heart, that this is just a rough patch, and that they'll work it once she comes back from her mother's house.
9. Having a daughter makes the modern man more of a complete person. He learns new stuff every day. How to clean crayon marks off of the walls. How to pay twelve-thousand dollars a year for the best preschool in town, because she deserves it. How to choke back tears the morning that she and her mother have gone, leaving nothing behind but a note that says "This couldn't have come as a shock", and an emergency contact number. How to go into the office afterward, and pretend that nothing's wrong.
10. The modern man makes sure the dishes on the rack have dried completely before putting them away. Linda always made sure of that. Sometimes he even misses her nagging. Maybe it was out of love. Maybe it made him a better version of himself. He doesn't know anymore.

11. The modern man has never “pinned” a tweet, and he never will. The modern man only uses Twitter when his wife isn’t around, to reply “Hot. Cum 2 Chicago BB” to automated spambots.
12. The modern man checks the status of his Irish Spring bar before jumping in for a wash. Too small, it gets swapped out. Linda used to do this for him. He has to do it now. Be strong. Remember to check.
13. The modern man listens to Wu-Tang at least once a week. His therapist said that it should be a sort of meditation, a sort of psychic grounding that helps him remember that people exist outside of himself. All he knows is that for 61 minutes and 31 seconds, 36 Chambers helps him forget his flaws, his weaknesses. While listening, perhaps for the first time in his life, he feels strong.
14. The modern man still jots down his grocery list on a piece of scratch paper. The market is no place for his face to be buried in the phone. Not after Linda, during one of his shopping trips, almost caught him texting “See you later 2night bb ;)” to *Mechanic* on his phone.
15. The modern man has hardwood flooring. his children can detect his mood from the stamp of his Kenneth Cole oxfords. Today they are slow, plodding. Each step takes longer than the next, and before he makes it to his Pottery barn sofa, can hear him whimper, every so slightly, before he collapses onto it, eyes shut but twitching. She goes back to her room. Uneasy.
16. The modern man lies on the side of the bed closer to the door. If an intruder gets in, he will try to fight him off, so that his wife has a chance to get away. He would kill for her. He would die for her. Doesn’t she know that? He lies in bed now, alone, wishing he had the chance to prove it. Wishing that he could take a Ruger .227 in the skull from a cat-burgling madman, delaying the thief for just long enough that she can run. So that once the cops show up, once she’s safe and the ambulance has arrived (too late), she will know that he has

given his life for her, and she will feel grief and happiness, and know that she was, truly, loved, even if he didn't always show it. He tried, in his own way.

17. Does the modern man have a melon baller? What do you think? How else would the cantaloupe, watermelon and honeydew he serves be so uniformly shaped? It was a gift from a far-off day, happy and bright. A reception outside, early October. She started opening the gifts in the car on the way home. She was always eager. She opened the box containing the melon baller, and it sat there on a bed of cotton, bright in the low sun. "What the hell is thing thing for?" she asks, smiling. "I have no idea" the modern man says, eyes bright and heart filled with joy. "We'll figure it out later."
18. The modern man has thought seriously about buying a shoehorn. But he hasn't. He used to tell Linda that he would all the time. "You never follow through" she would always say. Jokingly at first. But after a few years there was a certain detectable edge to it. Like the sun shining on a tornado.
19. The modern man buys fresh flowers more to surprise his wife than to say he is sorry. But she still says that he didn't do it often enough. Maybe he didn't. He just wishes he still could tell her that he's sorry.
20. On occasion, the modern man is the little spoon. Some nights, when he is feeling down or vulnerable, he needs an emotional and physical shield. Now he lays in his bed, curled up in a ball. Eyes shut tight, but not tight enough, shaking like a leaf. He tries to tell himself that everything will be alright.
21. The modern man doesn't scold his daughter when she sneezes while eating an apple doughnut, even if the pieces fly everywhere. There is nothing he wouldn't give right now, sitting in his Lay-Z-Boy, watching Seinfeld reruns at 3:00 AM on a Thursday night, to have his beautiful daughter in his house again, sneezing all over his kitchen walls. He should have been kinder that day. But he was late to work. He was stressed. He bent down to her level, and screamed in her face. For a moment, her tears actually made him glad. She deserved it, he thought at the time. Now he regrets it, every day.

22. The modern man still ambles half-naked down his driveway each morning to scoop up a crisp newspaper. Some of his neighbors comment on this. "It's 12:30. He should have been at work by now," they say, peeking through Venetian blinds as he lurches towards the newspaper like a badly-preserved zombie, hand raised, blocking the insistent sun. "Maybe we should talk to him," they say. They think about it for a minute, before closing the blinds and going back to their own lives.
23. The modern man has all of Michael Mann's films on Blu-ray (or whatever the highest quality thing is at the time). If he leaves them on all day and night, sometimes he can fool himself into thinking he's not alone. He can hear the home theater system from his basement, from his attic, from his kitchen. Looping continuously, familiar and warm. It brings him what comfort it can.
24. The modern man doesn't get hung up on his phone's battery percentage. if it needs to run flat, so be it. She hasn't texted him or called for days, and no-one else will. It's stuck somewhere in his couch cushions, and he doesn't care where anymore.
25. The modern man has no use for a gun. He doesn't own one, and he never will. Because if he did own one, the temptation would be just too great. One bullet, one squeeze, a fraction of a second. He could forget it all, and they could forget him. They could forget all of the good, and all of the bad. There's more of one than the other. He doesn't even know which anymore.
26. The modern man cries. He cries often.
27. People aren't sure if the modern man is a good dancer or not. That is, until the D.J. plays his jam and he goes out there and puts on a clinic. He hasn't been in a club in a long time. While Pony by Ginuwine is playing, he forgets his age. He forgets that it's been twelve years since he went dancing. When he is sweaty and tired at the end of the song, he feels a sense of relief. A song starts playing. He doesn't know it, but everyone else at the club does. They start to dance around him, happy and young. And while they enjoy

themselves, the modern man stands, motionless, in the middle of the crowd. He suddenly feels like this is a metaphor for his whole life. He walks out of the club. He will never be seen again.

Eric used to live with his wife and daughter in Cincinnati, OH. He now lives there alone.