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A look at life hacks

By Brian Lockhart

There are a few life hacks that should be taught by your parents, or maybe even in a school, that seem like pretty common sense, but not everyone follows the same rules all the time.

Here's a few.

If someone is pointing a gun at you, you should never stop talking. Apparently it's harder to shoot someone who is still engaging with you.

Of course this advice only comes from a movie, and in the movie the guy still got shot mid-sentence.

In the same vein, if you're a criminal who is in the habit of selling guns ? never sell the buyer the bullets at the same time. See Tuco, in The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

When getting a tattoo, never explain to the tattoo artist in the middle of his work that you haven't got the full amount to pay him at the moment, but you're getting paid next Tuesday and you'll get the money to him them.

Most likely he'll wave off the rest of his fee rather than try to hunt you down for the $50 later. Of course that tattoo you're getting of a portrait of your girlfriend or first-born child will probably end up looking like Mickey Mouse drawn by a six-year-old.

I saw that one happen first-hand!

When you are looking for a used car and the lot salesman says ?make me an offer,? get back in your old jalopy, deliver an appropriate hand gesture and continue on to a reputable dealer. If he can't give you a reasonable and educated price for a car on his lot, he probably has his mechanic putting sawdust in the transmission to make it run smoothly ? Barney Fife learned that one the hard way.

If you're a guy, any age, and you enter a store and a beautiful 20-year-old girl behind the makeup counter gives you big smile and says ?hello', don't start planning to leave your wife or figure out where you are going to take her on your first date.

That's her job.

This greeting phenomenon started in the 80s as a way to make customers feel welcome ? it also caused a lot of grief for beautiful 20-year-old makeup counter girls who found that most of the guys they were greeting mistook a friendly (and paid) welcome for a personal interest.

When you're just out of school and starting your first job in an industrial situation, never willingly accept an assignment from the supervisor or foreman to go to the maintenance department to a) ask for a bucket of the striped paint. b) inquire about the ?cold steam' pipes.

If you're the driver and you have passengers in your car, never assume everyone else must have the same great taste in music as you. You may like Chinese gong music, or AC DC played super loud, but unless your passengers are like-minded teenagers, you're probably just going to make everyone's trip to the business conference rather unpleasant.

Restaurant etiquette should probably be taught from a young age. Most of us have been to a steak house where there's always one guy who orders a T-bone steak ?well done.? Most experienced servers have heard this before and will suggest something slightly different to avoid having to go to the kitchen and ask for an expensive stake to be ruined.

If you insist on having your steak ?well done', don't be surprised if it arrives at the table looking like a large charcoal briquette.

When dining in a restaurant that specializes in ethic fare, listen to your server.

I once saw a friend shoot flames out of the top of his head and steam out of his ears like a boiling tea kettle after insisting he have the ?real thing' when it came to ordering soup in an Indian restaurant. This happened after the waiter politely told him that perhaps the North American version might be a little more agreeable to his taste. Nope, he had to have the real thing.

He paid twice for that meal ? once when the bill arrived, and a second time later that evening when all the spices really hit their mark.

If you're ever in a person's home or even an art gallery or public venue where there is a painting of someone hanging proudly on the wall, never do a Fred Flintstone and say ?I don't know what the artist got for painting that, but they should have gotten life!? Variations aren't acceptable either. No matter what, always say something pleasant.

Funeral etiquette, well, that's a whole new column.