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COUPLES

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01

plucking your eyebrows**Common mistake**

Tweezing your way down to a pair of parentheses

The inside tip Hold an eyebrow pencil up to your face and line up the right side of the eraser with the center of your left nostril. Point the tip of the pencil toward your hairline. The spot where the right edge of the pencil intersects the inside corner of your left brow is where the brow should begin, says Damone Roberts, stylist on TLC's *10 Years Younger*. Now move the tip of the pencil like a compass needle, lining up its right edge with the outer (left) edge of your pupil. The spot where the right edge of the pencil now intersects the brow is where its arch should peak. Next, move the pencil so it's lined up with the outer (left) edge of the iris. That's where it should end. (Using another eyebrow pencil to mark these spots will make tweezing easier.) Repeat the whole process on the other eye. As you pluck, step back and check for fullness.

**cleaning a burnt skillet**

Common mistake Scrubbing until the steel wool sets off sparks

The inside tip Ah, nothing completes a nice home-cooked meal like walking back into the kitchen and facing a gunk-encrusted pan. You can either pretend you're Cinderella and have fun scouring as if winning your prince depends on it, or simply fill the pan with water and bring it to a boil to soften the carbonized matter. When the water cools off, the sludge should come off with one swipe of the sponge, says Peter Kelly, chef instructor at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island. Kelly's bonus tip: Add 2 teaspoons of baking soda to the water to prevent the pancakes your prince will be making you in the morning from tasting like sautéed onions.

02

Life just got easier

We reveal the secrets to mastering 14 maddening little tasks—from popping a cork to fixing your toilet

BY STEVE CALECHMAN

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on't you love how you can ace a crucial meeting, nail a near-impossible yoga pose, suggest the ideal spot to meet your friends for dinner, and then make a total ass out of yourself while repeatedly trying—and failing—to parallel park right in front of the restaurant

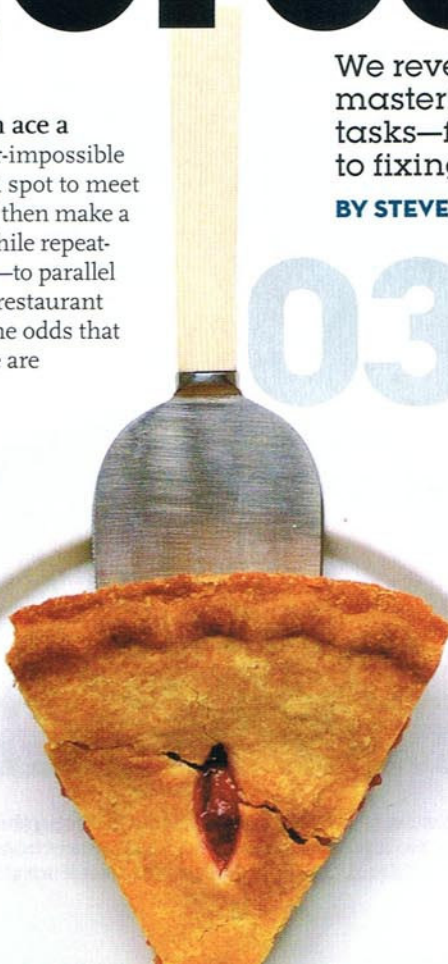
window? But unless your last name is Andretti, the odds that anyone has ever showed you the proper technique are slim to none. The same goes for other everyday challenges like extracting a stubborn wine cork, asking for a raise, or getting comfy on a plane. It's just not the kind of stuff you learn in college. Good thing for the rest of us, there are people out there who have made it their mission to perfect these deceptively simple tasks. We tracked them down and begged them to share the insider knowledge we've been missing all along.

03

removing the first piece of pie**Common mistake**

Brandishing your great-grandma's 100-year-old pie cutter

The inside tip That wedge-shaped spatula your family's been calling the pie cutter all these years isn't actually for cutting. It's for sliding under an already sliced piece of pie and lifting it out. And for that, it works great. But to actually make the cut, a sharp serrated blade and a sawing motion are your keys to success. This combo slashes through the pie's surface, filling, and crust without compressing the contents, says Ken Haedrich, author of *Pie*. Cut at least two pieces to start (sectioning the whole pie would be ideal) to provide adequate wiggle room to remove the first piece intact. Wipe the blade with a paper towel after each cut to clean the teeth.



04

introducing a speaker

Common mistake

Hogging the spotlight

The inside tip Don't feel pressure to entertain the crowd. After a speech, no one says, "The chairman was okay, but the woman who introduced her... I was spellbound." Your goal is simplicity, says TJ Walker, author of *Presentation Training A-Z*. Pick one thing that the audience would be impressed by and one thing it would be surprised by. End with, "Ladies and gentlemen, I present..." with the person's name being the last thing out of your mouth. The audience knows to applaud. The speaker feels loved. You're done. Have some salad.



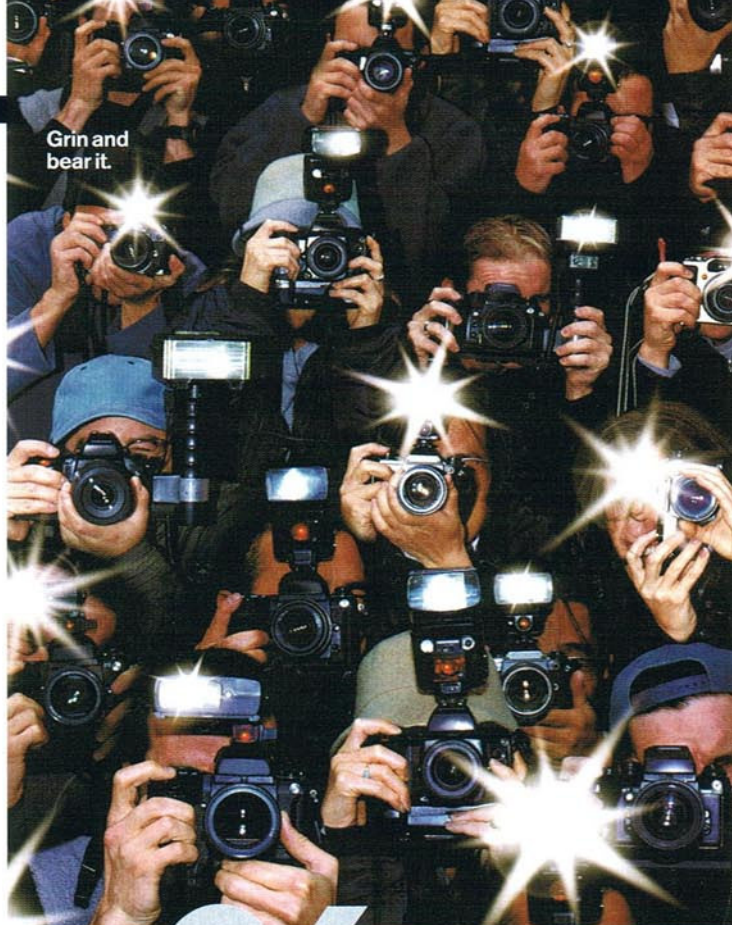
sleeping on a plane

Common mistake

Forgetting to pack noise protection

The inside tip

Listen, there will be screaming babies, snoring old men, obsessive pen-clicking, roaring engines, and perpetually beeping Game Boys. You can count on it. So get yourself a pair of silicone earplugs and bring them on every flight. Found at any drugstore, they're comfortable over the long haul because they mold to your ears, and they really do dull the buzz, says Ed Stepanski, Ph.D., director of the Sleep Disorders Center at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. And dorky as it may be, bringing along an inflatable neck pillow will pay off in precious zzz's. It'll prevent head-bobbing and allow you to sleep sitting up. Top off this fetching ensemble with a sleep mask; many airlines now offer movie and cable menus at every seat, and you never know when the person next to you will kick off a *Frasier* marathon.



Grin and bear it.

06 smiling for pictures

Common mistake

Flashing your high beams

The inside tip

When you crack a genuine smile, it engages your entire face—your mouth stretches wide, which exposes your gums (and possibly a few cavities), your nostrils flare, and your eyes disappear. Frankly, it isn't pretty. To keep your mug looking newscaster-smooth, just smile with your mouth. Show a good bit of teeth for a happy look but keep your now well-plucked brows relaxed to prevent the never-attractive forehead crinkle. And when you look at the camera, think about looking into the eyes of a friend, model Ashley Stetts says. You'll look more welcoming and friendly, and the smile will appear more genuine.

05

mincing garlic

Common mistake

Showing the clove an iota of mercy

The inside tip

You'll get more flavor out of a clove of garlic if you slap it around than if you slice it up neatly. So take out any burgeoning animosity for your boss on a clove by giving it a good, firm whack with the flat side of a chef's knife blade. The skin will break and the garlic will slip out, says chef Peter Kelly. Then smash it again and chop it by rocking the knife back and forth, holding the knife tip between your thumb and forefinger.



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