

# HOW TO SUPER

It's not just a cook and a driver—in the 21st century you also need a crystal hunter and a cultural attaché. And don't forget your fascia!

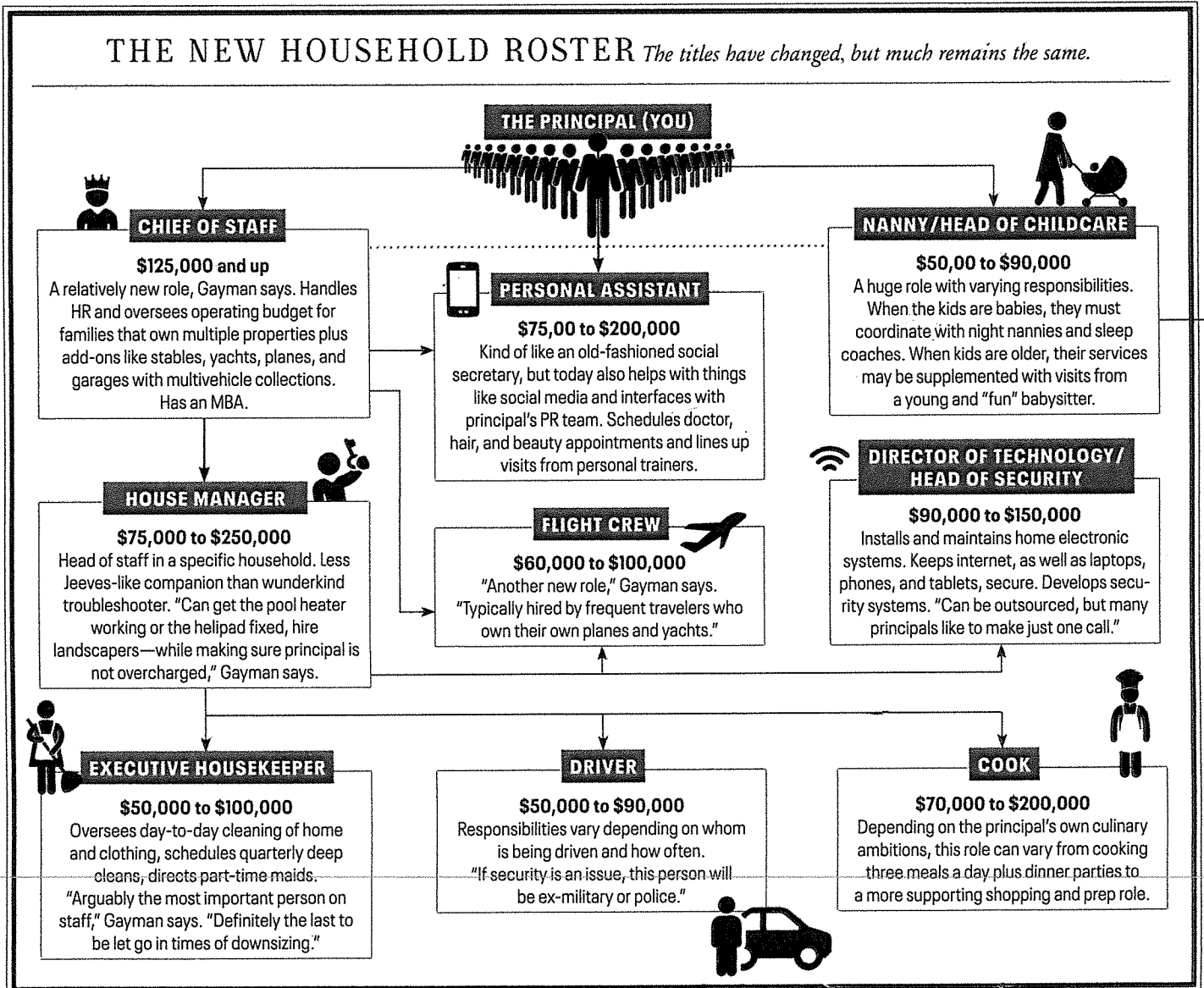
BY NORMAN VANAMEE

Things have obviously changed since the days in which *Downton Abbey* is set," says Andrew Gayman of Charles MacPherson Associates, a butler school and placement agency in Toronto. "Staffs are much smaller, and that means employees have to take on multiple roles." Gayman and his team look for people who can "set up dinner for 20 at the last minute, find the best contractor to fix the AC on a hot summer day, and line up a dog walker at a faraway

vacation house, all without blinking an eye."

However, there are still some things modern servants can learn by watching *Downton*—the series and the movie. "It's inevitable that you'll face personal challenges in dealing with your colleagues," says Gayman, who worked for years as a house manager at an estate before he began teaching others. "And it's never, ever a good idea to cross the professional line and become too intimate with your principal."

## THE NEW HOUSEHOLD ROSTER *The titles have changed, but much remains the same.*

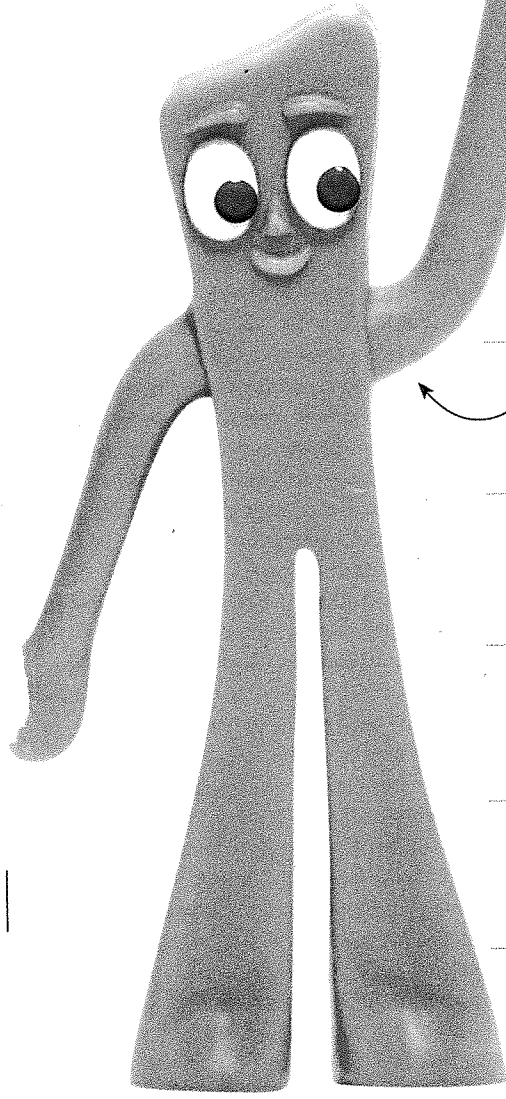


# STAFF YOUR LIFE



## THE ON-DEMAND TEAM

Modern households employ a variety of specialists—either by the hour or on retainer—who can solve the most modern of problems.



### CULTURAL ATTACHE

\$750 (per month for weekly classes)



**Brian Grazer, Bob Iger, and Katia Beauchamp**, among others, have used Brian Grossman and his Zeitguide service to get regular reports on what's important in the world of culture. [BRAD@ZEITGUIDE.COM](mailto:BRAD@ZEITGUIDE.COM)

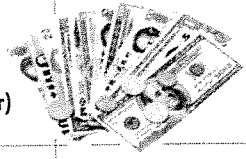
### PERSONAL STRETCHER

\$175 (per session)

Not to be confused with a trainer, yoga instructor, or masseuse, this specialist bends clients' arms, legs, and torsos until all is limber. The profession reached peak visibility when real-life stretcher **Kelly Stackhouse** loosened up Bobby Axelrod on *Billions*. [KELLYMARIEYOGA.COM](http://KELLYMARIEYOGA.COM)

### TRAVEL GURU

\$40,000 (per year)

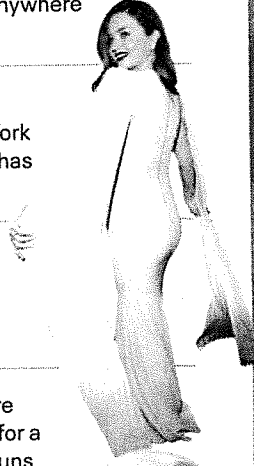


**Nota Bene Global** assigns you a consultant, who secures the most coveted hotel suites, villas, yachts, restaurant tables—you name it—anywhere in the world. [NOTABENEGLOBAL.COM](http://NOTABENEGLOBAL.COM)

### ENERGY HEALER

\$350 (per session)

Helps correct psychic and/or physical imbalances—personal or corporate. **Miranda Kerr** has used New York and L.A.-based intuitive healer **Holly Star**, who also has a shop called **Matter + Home**. [HOLLY@BELIEVEINSTARS.COM](mailto:HOLLY@BELIEVEINSTARS.COM)



### PRIVATE ART CURATOR

\$100 (per hour, plus commissions)

Oversees everything from personal art collections to private museums. **Mitch Rales** hired a curator named **Emily Wei**, then married her and created the **Glenstone** museum.

### CRYSTAL HUNTER

\$100,000 (starting price for museum quality crystal)



**Daniel Trinchillo**, the Indiana Jones of rare mineral procurement, has found crystals for a who's who of woo-woo billionaires. Now runs a gallery in New York. [MARDANIFINEMINERALS.COM](http://MARDANIFINEMINERALS.COM)



### HOME AURA ADJUSTER

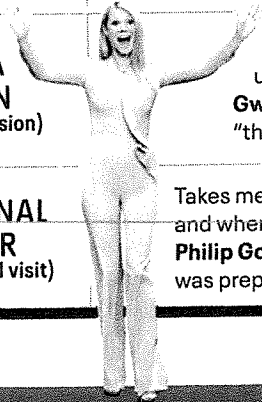
\$750 (one-hour consultation)



**The Cristalline** is one of a new breed of firms that performs "interior therapy for the home." That can entail either removing or buying furniture—but, always, the adding of crystals. [THECRISTALLINE.COM](http://THECRISTALLINE.COM)

### FASCIA PERSON

\$200 (per session)

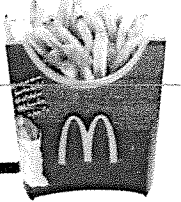


It's a membrane that surrounds muscles. Manipulating it supposedly improves tone and posture. **Gwyneth Paltrow** calls her person, **Lauren Roxburgh**, "the body whisperer." [LAURENROXBURGH.COM](http://LAURENROXBURGH.COM)

### NUTRITIONAL ADVISER

\$695 (for initial visit)

Takes measurements and then tells you what to eat and when. **Jonah Hill** sent pictures of his meals to **Philip Goglia**, a Santa Monica nutritionist, when he was preparing for a role. [PFCNUTRITION.COM](http://PFCNUTRITION.COM)



### TUTORS AND COACHES

Musical instrument lessons (\$200/hour); supplemental coaching for team sports (\$100/hour); math tutor (\$200/hour); language tutor (\$200/hour); homework coach (\$150/hour); SAT prep (\$350 and up per hour); cognitive behavioral therapist (\$300 for 50 minutes).

GETTY IMAGES (11)

The student squats so he's eye level with the stemware. After a few frozen moments, Fink gently pushes the white wine glass two inches to the right, then returns to his seat in the corner, where he begins folding napkins into the shape of elves' shoes.

The classroom is on the ground floor of Ditchley Park, a grand stone house built in 1722 in the countryside 75 miles west of London. It served as Winston Churchill's country retreat during World War II and is now a foundation and conference center. Fink worked as head butler here before he retired from full-time work 17 years ago, and he keeps his practice room tidy, to simulate the grand rooms in which butlers serve. But it's still a classroom; a plastic bag from Tesco, evidence of a supermarket run, sits on the floor.

Fink learned his skills as a Royal Navy steward and went on to work in palaces and private homes. He has served Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh, and Princess Margaret. "I've seen so much that I know what people want, but it was only after I'd been in the business for 50 years that I felt I could start to teach others," he says. His school is one of only a handful in the UK, and there are even fewer in the U.S.—just two or three. Even in past generations, when butlers were more common, there weren't many schools; this was a job you learned by doing it. The schools have become necessary as the number of butlers has declined. Fink runs an agency in addition to his school, to place graduates in homes and on yachts. "Butler wanted" ads are often posted on sites like LinkedIn. (Even the royal family finds its butlers by placing ads. They don't recruit from a particular school, and listings are open to the public, but they usually entail a year of on-the-job training.)

As the student lays 10 white cotton place mats edged in lace, Fink pulls out leather-bound photo albums that span decades. In one shot he holds an umbrella for Queen Elizabeth as she walks the grounds at Ditchley. He tells stories: of the years he spent teaching the staff of a Thai princess (they were required to walk on their knees when presenting something to the royal family); of the Kuwaiti princess who made a sizable donation upon her departure from Ditchley so he could add new dishes and silverware to his training collection.

"How do you define a butler? By looking at his shoes," Fink says suddenly, nodding at his student. "I helped him shine his shoes yesterday. He'll learn, and I think be very good once he's trained."

Fink's own shoes are so shiny they look like patent leather. Before wearing them for the first time he worked on them for more than an hour. Polish, spit, rub, repeat. Then he warmed the polish on the shoes with a candle and polished them again.

He is chatty, Fink. At one point he produces a silver salver, or tray. "For presenting cups of tea, or mobile phones, or newspapers, that sort of thing," he says. He is showing it off. (The tray is stored in an orderly pantry containing all manner of toast holders,

teaspoons—and a bar stocked with Gordon's gin, Courvoisier, Famous Grouse, and Macallan single malt.)

Fink's student sets a four-piece silver cruet for salt, white pepper, black pepper, and mustard above the forks. As he does, Fink deftly drops one of the most important but surprising tenets of butlering: Though there are strict conventions regarding what goes where, a butler must adapt to how people actually behave. For example: "The cruet *should* be removed after the main course, but I know that many people like mustard with their cheese or soufflé, which comes near the end of the meal. So I like to keep the cruet on the table until after that."

It's an interesting life, this life of service. It's not really about the placement of glasses, and yet the careful placement of glasses signals that a butler understands what this work is truly about: freeing his employer to think about other things. "The main users of butlers are wealthy people who can buy everything except for one thing: time," says Vincent Vermeulen, founder of the School for Butlers & Hospitality in Belgium. "That is what our butlers give back. It's no longer royals and their families; it's more the modern lawyer or dot-com billionaire. We even have an NBA basketball player as a client." (The school also helps the player find staff for his household.)

The more perfect a butler makes everything for the people he serves, the more time those people will have to live their important lives and achieve important things. And, in that way, the servant will have played a role in those achievements.

At long last, the table is complete. The student glances at Fink.

The master rises. This is the moment. Fink sits in the head seat, scanning the table. He cocks his head so it's level with the silver. The student stands very still, stifling a grin—he is proud, it seems, and just a little nervous. It's funny, these two men standing in a room in the countryside studying table settings, the activity of all of mankind unfolding outside the windows. This is the genius of Fink's work, the secret to his success (and to anyone's, really): To be perfect, he must believe—must convince himself—that these table settings are all that matter in the world.

Then, finally: "You've done it well," Fink says. "The glasses are in a straight line, the settings are equidistant, and everything is set at the right angles."

The student smiles. Fink rises and lights the virgin white tapers in the candelabras. The student closes the shutters on each window and turns off the lights. The silver glitters; the glasses shine. In the room's glow Fink studies the table, as if inhaling it. "After setting a table I think, Would I like to sit at this table?" he says. "That's how I know if it's perfect."

One of the goals of today's lesson was to replicate the perfect, wonderful feeling of anticipation that immediately precedes a formal dinner. And somehow, in this little practice room where no nobleman ever eats, it does.

It feels perfect, and wonderful. T&C

## RICK FINK'S RULES OF BUTLERING (ABRIDGED)



- **Fish forks and knives** and soup spoons were invented by the middle class. Avoid them.
- **Speak to the people** you're serving only if they speak to you—or if they need help finding something on the serving platter.
- If the angle is tricky, **don't pour water** into a glass on the table, in case some spills. Take the glass to the side and fill it.



- **No white gloves** unless you're carrying silver. "This is a thing people have come up with recently," Fink says. "The gentry hate it when they see butlers wearing gloves."

- **Red wine** is always served from a decanter, but white can be served from the bottle. To avoid having your hands warm the wine, wrap a cloth napkin around the neck and run the ends down the sides.

- **Water stains** on silver or fingerprints on glass can be wiped away after you've held the piece over a bowl of steaming water.

BUTLER-VALET.SCHOOL.CO.UK

