

Table Manners & Eating

Good manners put others before you and are a sign of respect and courtesy. They are practical guidelines to help you interact positively with other people and can add to your future success in the world of work. Manners are what is customary for the time and may differ by culture, environment and generation. You are encouraged to pay attention and observe what others do to determine socially appropriate response.

Tips for Being a Host or Guest

When you are the host:

- Clean your home before guests arrive.
- Greet your guests as they arrive.
- Thank guest for coming as they enter/exit.
- Let guests go first getting in line, at a buffet, going out the door, etc.
- Show guests around the main living area of your home if they have never been there before.
- Introduce new friends to everyone to ensure that no one is left out.
- Mingle with everyone.
- Be flexible when it comes to different activities.
- When eating a meal and a friend calls, tell them you will call back after you have finished eating.

When you are the guest:

- Be friendly and polite to the host, their elders and other guests.
- Do not help yourself to something unless you are told that you may do so.
- Offer to help clean up after a meal or if a mess happens.
- Say thank you when leaving.

Table Manners and Eating

Before the meal begins:

- Be on time.
- Dress appropriately.
- Never comb your hair or apply makeup at the table.
- Wait for host/hostess to tell you where to sit.
- Remain standing until host/hostess tells everyone to sit down.
- Males should assist females as they sit at the table.

During the Meal

- Place napkin on your lap. Never tuck napkin under your chin.
- Sit up straight with both feet on the floor.
- Keep elbows off the table.
- Wait until everyone is served before beginning to eat.



- A cheerful conversation adds to the enjoyment of a meal.
- Pass food to your right.
- Say “please” and “thank-you” when asked for food to be passed to you.
- Use the serving utensils to serve your food and not your own flatware.
- Flatware is used from the outside in. Begin with the piece that is farthest from the plate.
- Chew your food with your lips closed. Do not talk with your mouth full.
- After your knife and fork have been used, keep them on the plate. Never place them on the tablecloth.
- When drinking water, hold the glass near the base.
- When food you dislike is served to you, eat what you can and do not draw attention to it.
- Cut the meat on your plate one piece at a time. Cut food into small bites and avoid putting large portions in your mouth.
- When using a soup spoon, dip the spoon toward the back of the bowl.
- Never blow on hot soup or any other hot food. Wait for the food to cool.
- Pass the salt and pepper together, even if they only asked for the salt.

After the Meal

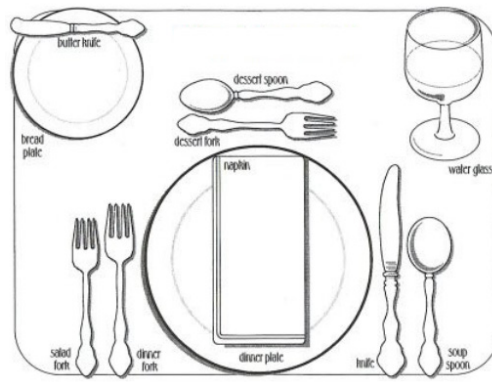
- If a guest at a home, carry your plate, utensils and glass to the kitchen when the meal is finished. Thank the cook for an excellent meal.
- Fold your fabric napkin and leave it alongside your plate – if it is paper, toss it in the trash when you help clear the table.
- When you have finished eating, place the knife and fork on the plate.
- Ask permission to get up when you are finished with your food - “May I be excused?”
- Toothpicks should be used in private.

Table Settings

Make sure to eat with the proper silverware. The food you eat first has the silverware farthest from the plate so that you work your way inward. Most special occasions and restaurants, set the table similarly to this:

- On the right of the plate from the outside in, is the soup spoon, followed by the salad knife and finally the dinner knife.
- On the left side of the plate from the outside in, is the salad fork and then the dinner fork.
- The bread plate is the small plate in the upper left corner with a butter knife placed on top.
- Silverware above the plate is for dessert.
- For soup and/or salad served before the main course, place those dishes on top of the dinner plate.

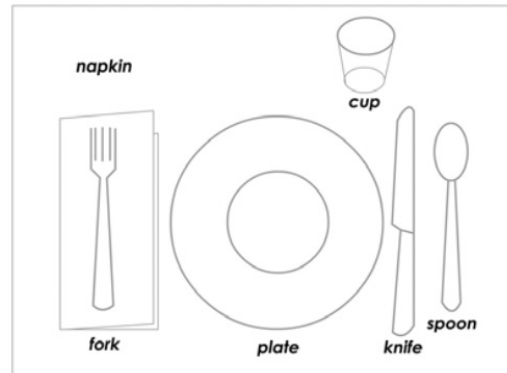




At home, or in a casual setting, set the table as follows:

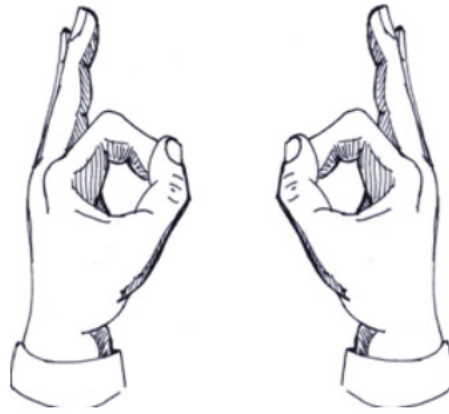
- Set the plate down first.
- On the right of the plate, set the knife down next to the plate with the sharp edge facing the plate.
- Next, place the spoon to the right of the knife.
- On the left of the plate, set the fork down with the napkin to the left of the fork.
- Finally, set the glass in the upper right corner of the plate.

Informal Place Setting



Bread and Drinks

Try this clever tip to remember where your bread plate and drink are located. With your thumb and forefingers create a “b” for bread with your left hand, and a “d” for drink in your right hand.



Tips for Dining Out

- Arrive just prior to the reservation time.
- Follow the host to the table.
- After being seated, look at the menu and make your selection.
- Say please and thank you as you order.
- After orders have been taken, place your napkin in your lap and use it when needed.
- Say thank you to servers when they arrive with your food or refill your beverage.
- Laying your fork and knife down on the plate, point-to-point, tells the wait staff that you are still eating. When they are placed parallel together that signals that you are done with your meal.
- If you think you have spinach stuck in your teeth, excuse yourself and place your napkin in your chair and push the chair back in towards the table.
- When dining out, tipping is appropriate. Some restaurants already calculate in the tip so check your bill prior to leaving a 15-20% tip.

