



Professional Dining Etiquette

Nervous about napkins? Frightened by formalities?

Why is Dining Etiquette Important?

Learning table manners isn't as intimidating as you may think. Like anything, it takes practice. Practicing in comfortable environments makes this an easier and more natural experience.

The pressure knowing that a hiring decision could rest partially on your dinner performance is anxiety producing! A keen mind, good appearance, and nice personality will not outweigh poor table manners.

Etiquette is regarded as an index of social adjustment.

The person who doesn't have manners at the table will most likely lack them in other social relationships or work settings.

So much business is conducted over the course of a meal. Whether it is to impress a potential employer, win over a customer, enhance a client relationship, or acquire a promotion, you want to feel confident and at ease. You can't concentrate on the business at hand if you are worried about which fork to use, how to eat pasta, or what to do with the olive pit in your mouth.

SOME TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED...

Playing the role of the Host/Hostess

- If necessary, introduce guests to each other.
- Choose a restaurant where you know the food and service are good and the atmosphere is conducive to conducting business.
- Make arrangements ahead of time to take care of the bill.
- Confirm the time and place either the day before the meal or that day.
- Give your guest the prime seat—the one with the view.
- Make suggestions about what to order or let your guest know what you will be ordering.
- Wait until your order has been taken before you begin discussing business.
- Allow your guest to order first.
- Extend a toast if you wish to, if it is a small intimate group, it is not necessary to stand. Make it short, simple and flattering.

Playing the role of the Guest

- Be on time or call ahead of time if you will be more than five minutes late.
- Ask your host for suggestions about what to order.
- Stay in a moderate/average price range. Don't order the most expensive item on the menu.
- Remember that the person paying for the meal decides when to talk business.
- Send a handwritten note the next day to thank your host.
- Remember that business meals are not about the food—they are about business first.

RSVP

- Reply to invitations promptly. Failure to reply is a lack of consideration for the host who needs to know the number of people who will be attending. Sometimes a reply card will be included which will make it easy to respond.
- Don't delay, RSVP today!

Gifts

- When you are invited to someone's home, bring along a token of your appreciation. It can be as simple as a jar of homemade jam or as elaborate as a fine bottle of wine. The host/hostess will be grateful that you care about them.

Clothing

- When you receive an invitation, ask about the style of dress if you are unsure. Consider the purpose or type of party and the time of day when choosing the appropriate outfit.
- Never wear a hat at the table or a sleeveless shirt.

Nametags

- If nametags are provided, wear yours on your *right* shoulder so that it can be easily read when shaking hands.

Approaching the table

- Turn off beepers, pagers, and cell phones.
- Go to the table with confidence.
- Older and honored persons are to precede you to the table.
- Sit where the host assigns you.
- Place items such as purses, handbags, umbrellas, keys, or personal items under the table or check them at the coat check.
- In a mixed group, a woman pauses to permit the gentleman on her left to assist her as she sits. A gentleman always assists the woman on his right. He also assists the woman on his left if there is no other person to perform this courtesy. The procedure is to pull the chair out from the table slightly and then push it gently under a woman as she sits.
- When older and younger women make up the group, the younger women assist the older women as they seat themselves.
- Pull out your chair with your left hand and enter with your left side (from the right of your chair). Exit with your right side and push the chair back to the table.
- When in doubt, watch your hostess/host for cues.

Introductions

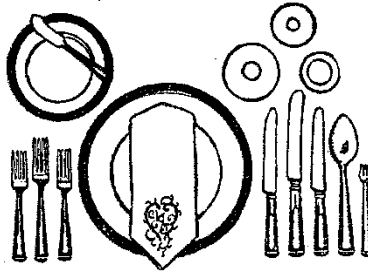
- The host is responsible for introducing unfamiliar company before the meal begins.
- If there is not a host, and you are in company you are not familiar with, make it a point to introduce yourself to everyone at the table before the meal begins.

Posture

- Sit up straight; do not slouch or lean over the table.
- Your feet should rest flat on the floor; not crossed or wrapped around the chair legs.
- Do not rock back in the chair.
- Keep your hands above the table at all times while eating. You can rest your wrists on the edge of the table during your courses but elbows on the table are only acceptable between courses when there is no plate in front of you. When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap.

Place Setting

- The place setting serves much like the road map for your meal. When you sit down, you can look at the way the table is set to figure out what courses you will be eating and which beverages will be offered.
- Liquids are placed on the right; solids on the left.
- If someone decides to claim your bread plate, let it go. Place your bread on a plate, which you are currently using. If you are between courses and don't have a plate, wait until one comes along before taking the bread.
- Do not finger or rearrange the silverware or glassware.
- If you notice the silverware or glassware is dirty, simply ask for a clean one.



Utensils

- Forks are placed on the left with the napkin and bread and butter plate. Knives and spoons are on the right with the glasses. Utensils are used from the **outside in**.
- Never place used silverware back on the table.
- Do not leave spoons in a cup; place on a saucer.
- In the case of a very formal dinner, some of the flatware may be added or replaced with each course.
- If a piece of silverware falls on the floor, simply scoot it under the table. Ask the server or the host to bring you another one.
- Never wave your fork or knife around or use as props.

Napkins

- There are signals for removing the napkin from the table. One way is after the host does so.
- If there is no host at the table, wait until everyone at the table has been seated to place your napkin on your lap.
- In fine restaurants, the server will usually take the napkin from the table and place it in your lap for you.
- Place the napkin folded in half (with the crease closest to your waist) in your lap.
- A luncheon napkin is much smaller and would be opened all the way.
- Never tuck the napkin in to your clothing, either at the waist or chin.
- If a napkin falls on the floor, ask the server or host to bring you another one.
- The napkin is used for blotting your mouth, not serious wiping.
- For men, ties should never be tossed back across the shoulder to get them out of harm's way. Remember, the tie was actually designed to protect the shirt.
- For ladies, if you are concerned about your lipstick coming off on your napkin, blot it with a tissue before you come to the table. Lipstick on napkins or glasses is most unattractive.
- If you need to excuse yourself from the table, do so between courses. Simply excuse yourself and leave your napkin on the **seat** of your chair to indicate to the server that you will be returning. Never ball up a napkin.
- When the meal is over, the host will place the folded napkin on the table. If there is no host, wait until everyone has finished or as everyone is rising from the table. Put your napkin to the **left** of your place setting. Avoid placing napkins on clean or dirty plates.
- If you must blow your nose, please excuse yourself from the table; do not use the napkin—it is not a handkerchief.

Service

- Food is served from the **left**.
- Food and beverage is **Refilled, Removed and Replenished** from the **right**.
- You do not need to thank the server for each course they bring out.
- It is appropriate to move and interact with servers in order to make serving easier.

Food & Beverage Selection

- It is best to order foods that can be eaten with a fork and knife. Finger foods can be messy.
- Avoid ordering foods you are not familiar with yet be open to trying new things to demonstrate your willingness to learn.
- If you have allergies or food restrictions, it is acceptable to ask how the food is prepared and to make a special request in advance.
- If you are attending a large function where the meal is pre-ordered, inquire about the menu or tell the person issuing the invitation that you have special needs.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages when on an interview for a job.

Eating

- Wait for the host/hostess to pick up their fork before you start to eat. If there is a custom to say a prayer before eating, you will not be embarrassed.
- If there is not a host/hostess, wait until everyone has been served before you begin.
- At large tables that seat 8 or 10, the wait staff may have difficulty serving everyone at the same time. It is considerate of those who are waiting for their food to encourage the other to start while their food is warm.
- If you are seated at a round table of 6-10, wait until all have been served before you begin eating.
- If you are seated at a long banquet table, begin eating when at least 3 people on either side of you have been served.
- If you are served foods that you cannot eat, eat what you can on the plate and leave the rest. Same goes for foods you do not care for.
- Never share foods or eat off someone else's plate.
- Remember that business meals are not about the food—they are about business first.
- Pace your eating. Pay attention to how fast or slow the other diners are eating so you do not finish way ahead of them or lag behind.
- Never ask for a doggy bag.
- Do not smoke at the table.
- Do not speak with food in your mouth.
- Never chew with your mouth open.
- Do not make loud noises when you eat.

American or Continental?

- Pick one style and stick with it. Either is appropriate, but requires PRACTICE!
- Where you place your utensils on your plate indicates whether you are resting between bites or have finished eating and are waiting for your plate to be removed.
- The American/Zig Zag style to indicate that you are **resting** between bites:
 - Place your knife horizontally at the top of your plate, blade facing in. Your fork is placed in the lower right hand portion of your plate (10:20).
- The American/Zig Zag style to indicate that you are **done eating**:
 - When you have finished, bring the knife down to rest beside the fork in the lower right- hand corner (10:20).
- The Continental/European style to indicate that you are **resting** between bites:
 - If you chose to eat Continental style, place the silverware in an inverted V position (tines down).
- The Continental/European style to indicate that you are **done eating**:
 - The finished position for Continental style is identical to American style except that the fork tines face down (10:20).

American/Zig Zag Style

Cutting

Fork remains in the **left** hand (tines down) hand.

Eating

Switch to eat with the **fork in the right** hand. (tines up)

Resting

Rest the knife on the top of the plate with the serrated edge is facing you in between bites.

Closing Out

To close out, place the fork and the knife at 10:20 position, tines facing up.

Continental/European Style

Cutting

Keep the **fork in the left** (tines down) and the **knife in the right** and the **knife** in the **right** hand at all times.

Eating

Keep the **fork in the left** (tines down) and the knife in the right hand.

Resting

To rest, place the silver ware in an inverted V position (tines down).

Closing Out

To close out, place the fork and knife at 10:20 position, tines facing down.

Eating Foods the Proper Way

HOT FOODS OR DRINKS

- Never blow on hot foods or beverages. If your soup/beverage is too hot to eat, let it sit until it cools.

SOUPS

- Do not slurp soup.
- Wait for soup to cool rather than blowing on it.
- Spoon the soup away from you when you take it out of the bowl.
- Clear soups are eaten from the side of the spoon.
- Soups with objects in them like meat and vegetables are eaten from the front or tip of the spoon.
- Do not lift the bowl to drink out of it.
- The only crackers you may crumble in the soup are oyster crackers.
- Place your soup spoon on the plate or in the bowl between spoonfuls.
- When you are finished, put the spoon on the saucer beside the bowl on the lower right side. If the soup is served in a shallow soup plate or dish, leave the spoon in the soup plate. The handle should go on the right side for easy removal by the wait staff.

BREAD

- Bread and butter plates are situated in the upper left side of your place setting above the forks.
- If you do not have a bread plate, put the bread on your entrée plate.
- If someone decides to claim your bread plate, let it go. Place your bread on a plate, which you are currently using. If you are between courses and don't have a plate, wait until one comes along before taking the bread.
- Bread should be eaten in bite-size pieces.
- Never break or cut the bread, cover it with butter and proceed to eat. Tear off one small bite size piece and butter only the piece you are preparing to eat. When ready for another piece, repeat the same process.
- If a loaf of bread is served, the person the loaf is sitting in front of will cover with linen napkin before cutting and pass the loaf to the right.
- If the butter comes in small wrapped packet, remove the butter from the wrapper, fold the wrapper and leave it on the bread plate.

SPICES

- Do not season your food until you have tasted it first. Some make take offense if you do so prior to tasting it. It indicates that you are assuming you will not like it without even trying it.
- Pass salt and pepper shakers together. They are married and should always come in a pair.
- Never use salt and pepper yourself before passing.

CONDIMENTS

- Don't hit the bottom of the bottle to get the ketchup out. You want to draw as little attention to yourself as possible when dining.
- If stuck, use a clean knife to gently release the ketchup.

SALAD

- Cut lettuce with your knife if necessary.
- If salad is the main course, use your entrée knife and fork.
- Be careful with the cherry tomato—pierce it gently and cut before placing in your mouth.
- Place the knife across the top of your bread plate when finished; you will need it for your entrée if there is only one knife at your place setting.

COFFEE, TEA & WATER

- Order coffee or tea after the main course.
- Do not drink from your glass with food in your mouth. Opening your mouth with food in it and possibly leaving remnants on the glass is unsightly.
- The water is for sipping, not for washing down your food.
- The water glass is the largest one on the table.
- Pass cream and sugar together. They are married and should always come in a pair.
- When you add packaged sweetener to your beverage, tear the packet only about two-thirds of the way across.
- Use no more than two packets of sweetener, and open them separately.
- Don't shake the packet.
- When empty, place on the edge of your saucer or bread plate. Do not crumble into a small ball.
- If you do not wish to drink coffee or tea, simply leave your cup tuned down.
- Stir iced tea with half-moon movements. Leave spoon to rest on the bread plate. Avoid clinking your spoon on the cup or glass.
- Never leave a spoon in the glass while you are drinking.
- Coffee is meant to be drunk after the meal, not during.
- Chewing ice at the table or spitting it back in the glass is not acceptable adult business behavior.
- Place the tea bag, after steeping, on the saucer of the cup after squeezing it gently against the side of your teaspoon.

WINE

- When you place your hand over the glass, look at the waiter and say, "No thank you."
- If wine is served, hold red wine glasses by the bowl and white wine glasses by the stem to avoid warming of the wine. (The red wine goblet is larger than the white wine goblet.)
- Alcoholic beverages should be avoided during business meals or taken in moderation.
- If you are not totally confident about ordering wine, call upon the wine steward or a knowledgeable server.
- To avoid confusion over pronunciation of foreign wines, use the bin number printed next to the name of the wine. There is less room for error when you order by number.
- When the wine is brought to the table, the server will hold the bottle up for you to verify that it is in fact the one that you ordered.
- There is no need to sniff the cork. Just check to see if it is dry or moist. If a wine bottle has been stored properly, the cork will be moist.
- Send the wine back only if there is something wrong with it, not because you aren't wild about your choice. Just order a different bottle next time.
- As the host, it is your duty to see that your guests' wine glasses are refilled, either by you or the server.
- The rule of drinking white wine with fish, and red wine with red meat no longer applies except at very formal dinners.

Please Pass the Peas

- Foods are passed to the **right**.
- Even if you chose to not have a particular item, continue to pass the food to others.
- Items with handles, such as gravy boats, should be passed with the handle towards the other person.
- If an item is sitting on the table in front of you, pick it up and pass the basket, dish, etc. to your right. You will take your helping when it comes around.
- If you need something you cannot reach, politely ask the person closest to the item you need to pass it.
- Pass the salt AND pepper or the cream AND sugar together even if the person only asks for one.

Conversation

- Engage in table conversation that is pleasant but entirely free of controversial subjects.
- Never tell jokes. You never know who you could offend.
- Use this time to network. Talk about hobbies and interests.
- Wait for the host to initiate or begin business discussions after a rapport has been established and meal has been ordered.

Excusing Yourself

- You should not leave the table during the meal except in an emergency. If you need to excuse yourself from the table during a meal, do so between courses.
- If food gets caught between your teeth, try to remove it with your tongue. Leave the table and go where you can to remove the food from your teeth in private.
- Never apply makeup or comb hair at the table.
- Excuse yourself from the table between courses. Leave your napkin on the **seat** of your chair to indicate to the server that you will be returning. Never ball up a napkin.
- When the meal is over, the host will place the folded napkin on the table. If there is no host, wait until everyone has finished or as everyone is rising from the table. Put your napkin to the **left** of your place setting. Avoid placing napkins on clean or dirty plates.
- If you must blow your nose, please excuse yourself from the table; do not use the napkin.
- Never push dishes away from you or stack dishes when you are finished.
- Properly close out your course by placing silverware on the plate using the American/Continental or European/Zig Zag close out setting.

Afterwards

- After the meal is complete, keep the host/hostess in mind by leaving at an appropriate time.
- Do not ask for a take-home bag of food.
- Always send a thank you note the next day to the host/hostess to express your appreciation for the invitation and hospitality.

Payment

- Whomever invited the guest(s) is responsible for picking up the tab.
- If a group of people are going to dine out, each individual is responsible for their portion of the payment.
- Some restaurants often require that groups of 6 or more leave a minimum gratuity which is often times automatically factored into bill.

Tipping

- The word “tip” originated as an acronym for the phrase, “To Insure Promptness.” Obviously, it began as a way of guaranteeing quality service. Today, however, tips are expected in most cases, regardless of level of service.
- Today the expected tip for **Waiters/Waitresses** is 15% of the bill total; however, for excellent service 20% or more is the norm. In an upscale restaurant, the customary amount is 20% because there are several servers, including the captain and busboy who will share the tip.
- Another question that arises is whether to include or exclude the sales tax when figuring the tip. The choice is yours, but it is perfectly acceptable to figure the tip minus the sales tax.
- The **Bartender** should be tipped between 10-15%.
- The **Valet/Parking Attendant** who parks your car also deserves a tip. Depending on the restaurant, give him one or two dollars. The more upscale the establishment, the higher the tip.
- The **Coatroom Clerk** should receive a tip of one dollar for every 1-2 coats.
- **Restroom Attendants** are tipped between \$.50 and \$1.

Bon appetite!