



Unit: Ground Rules
Skill 28: Minding Your Manners
Activity B: Formal Dinner Protocol

Worksheet

Basic Table Manners

Napkin Use: When the host unfolds his or her napkin, this is your signal to do the same. Place your napkin on your lap, unfolded if it is a small luncheon napkin or folded in half if it is a large dinner napkin. The napkin remains on your lap throughout the entire meal and should be used to gently blot your mouth when needed. If you need to leave the table during the meal, place your napkin on your chair as a signal to your server that you will be returning. The host will signal the end of the meal by placing his or her napkin on the table. Once the meal is over, you too should place your napkin neatly on the table to the right of your dinner plate. Do not refold your napkin, but don't wad it up, either.

Ordering: Ask your server any questions you may have; it is better to find out before you order that a dish is prepared with something you do not like or are allergic to. As a guest, you should not order one of the most expensive items on the menu or more than two courses unless your host indicates that it is all right. If the host says, "I'm going to try this delicious sounding cheesecake; why don't you try dessert too," or "The prime rib is the specialty here; I think you'd enjoy it," then it is all right to order that item if you would like.

"Reading" the Table Setting: Start by drawing an imaginary line through the center of the serving plate (the plate will be placed in the center of your dining space). To the right of this imaginary line all of the following will be placed; glassware, cup and saucer, knives, and spoons, as well as a seafood fork if the meal includes seafood. It is important to place the glassware or cup back in the same position after its use in order to maintain the visual presence of the table. To the left of this imaginary line all of the following will be placed; bread and butter plate (including small butter knife placed horizontally across the top of the plate), salad plate, napkin, and forks. Remembering the rule of "liquids on your right" and "solids on your left" will help in allowing you to quickly become familiar with the place setting.

Use of Silverware: Choosing the correct silverware from the variety in front of you is not as difficult as it may first appear. Starting with the knife, fork, or spoon that is farthest from your plate, work your way in, using one utensil for each course. The salad fork is on your outermost left, followed by your dinner fork. Your soup spoon is on your outermost right, followed by your beverage spoon, salad knife and dinner knife. Your dessert spoon and fork are above your plate or brought out with dessert. If you remember the rule to work from the outside in, you'll be fine.

There are two ways to use a knife and fork to cut and eat your food, American and European or Continental styles. Either style is considered appropriate. In the American style, cut the food by holding the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left hand with the fork tines piercing the food to secure it on the plate. Cut a few bite-size pieces of food, then lay your knife across the top edge of your plate with the sharp edge of the blade facing in. Change your fork from your left to your right hand to eat, fork tines facing up. The European or Continental style is the same as the American style in that you cut your meat by holding your knife in your right hand while securing your food with your fork in your left hand. The difference is your fork remains in your left hand, tines facing down, and the knife stays in your right hand.

When You Have Finished: Do not push your plate away from you when you have finished eating. Leave your plate where it is in the place setting. The common way to show that you have finished your meal is to lay your fork and knife diagonally across your plate. Place your knife

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and fork side by side, with the sharp side of the knife blade facing inward and the fork, tines down, to the left of the knife. The knife and fork should be placed as if they are pointing to the numbers 10 and 4 on a clock face. Make sure they are placed in such a way that they do not slide off the plate as it is being removed. Once you have used a piece of silverware, never place it back on the table. Do not leave a used spoon in a cup, either; place it on the saucer. You can leave a soup spoon in a soup plate. Any unused silverware is simply left on the table.

Other Tips:

- It is inappropriate to ask for a doggy bag when you are a guest. Save the doggy bag for informal dining situations.
- It is best to order foods that can be eaten with a knife and fork. Finger foods can be messy and are best left for informal dining.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages. Drinking too much when dining out is one of the most disliked behaviors.
- Do not smoke while dining out.
- Sit up straight at the table. It makes a good impression.
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap or resting on the table (with wrists on the edge of the table). Elbows on the table are acceptable only between courses, not while you are eating.
- Do not season your food before you have tasted it.
- Never chew with your mouth open or make loud noises when you eat. Although it is possible to talk with a small piece of food in your mouth, do not talk with your mouth full.
- Do not slurp soup from a spoon. Spoon the soup away from you when you take it out of the bowl and sip it from the side of the spoon. If your soup is too hot to eat, let it sit until it cools; do not blow on it.
- If food gets caught between your teeth and you can't remove it with your tongue, leave the table and go to a mirror where you can remove the food from your teeth in private.
- Eat rolls or bread by tearing off small bite size pieces and buttering only the piece you are preparing to eat. When ready for another piece, repeat the same process.
- Engage in table conversation that is pleasant but entirely free of controversial subjects.
- You should not leave the table during the meal except in an emergency. If you must leave briefly, simply excuse yourself. Later you can apologize to the host.
- If you need something that you cannot reach easily, politely ask the person closest to the item you need to pass it to you. For example, "Would you please pass the salt and pepper?"
- If a piece of your silverware falls onto the floor, pick it up if you can reach it and let the server know you need a clean one. If you cannot reach it, tell the server you dropped a piece of your silverware and ask for a clean one.
- If food spills off your plate, you may pick it up with a piece of your silverware and place it on the edge of your plate.
- Never spit a piece of bad food or tough gristle into your napkin. Remove the food from your mouth using the same utensil it went in with. Place the piece of food on the edge of your plate. If possible, cover it with some other food from your plate.