



## Manners, Meals and Interviewing

Employers need to trust you can represent them in social settings with customers, clients, colleagues and competitors. They will be watching your dining manners. The focus is on the interview, not the food! Eat a light snack before you go, as you might not get to eat much.

**TIP** -- Check out the restaurant ahead of time. That way you'll know exactly what's on the menu, what you might want to order and where the rest rooms are located.

### WHEN ARRIVING/LEAVING

- Enter the chair from the left and exit the right.
- Try to find common grounds of interest (sports, travel) that are not controversial.
- Always thank your host.

### PREPARE FOR CONVERSATION

It's important to be engaged in a conversation with the interviewer and whoever else is there. As well as responding to questions about you, ask questions, and carry on a conversation. The more comfortable and relaxed everyone is, the better chance you have of moving to the next round.

- Prepare yourself for various conversation points before you arrive at your interview.
- Jot down some notes about your recent accomplishments, past work experience and career objectives.
- Research the company so you can feel comfortable discussing aspects of the company history, for example.
- Do not monopolize the conversation, but don't be so quiet that the whole thing feels more like a monologue. Finding a middle ground may be difficult, but you don't want to come across as pushy or weak. Let the interviewer lead the conversation, but use pauses and silences to ask some questions.
- Never curse or make comments that can be interpreted as racist or sexist. Even if the other person makes inappropriate comments during the conversation, keep your approach cool and formal.
- This is not the time to enter into a discussion about politics, religion or anything controversial.
- Do not use slang, as it transmits a feeling of informality that puts you at a disadvantage.

### POLISH YOUR TABLE MANNERS

- Turn off phone before any meal or interview.
- Meeting materials or briefcases should be placed under your chair until it is time to discuss business.
- Follow your host's lead.
- Keep elbows close to the body. Never rest your elbows on the table – forearms are ok. Practice good posture.

### POLISH YOUR TABLE MANNERS (CONT)

- Eat slowly and take moderately sized bites. Try to pace your meal to finish at the same time as your host or the majority of the group at the table.
- Do not talk with your mouth full.
- Cut only enough food for the next mouthful.
- Chew with your mouth closed.
- Taste your food before seasoning it.
- If you need to remove food from your mouth, remove it the same way it went in. Do not spit it into a napkin.
- If hot food is burning your mouth, discretely drink something cool to counteract the food.
- For hard to scoop items, use your knife or a piece of bread to push the items onto your fork.
- If you don't like something, don't eat it, but don't make a big deal out of it.
- Do not ask to taste someone else's food. Similarly, do not offer a taste of your food to someone else.
- Do not smoke at the table.

- Women should never re-apply lipstick at the table after a meal.
- Do not blow your nose at the dinner table. Excuse yourself to visit the restroom. Wash your hands before returning to the dining room.
- If you cough, cover your mouth with your napkin to stop the spread of germs and muffle the noise. If your cough becomes unmanageable, excuse yourself to visit the restroom. Wash your hands before returning to the dining room.
- Use “please” and “thank-you” and always be polite to the wait staff.
- Remember: the main point of the meal is the interview, not the food.
- Always send a thank-you note for the interview and the meal.

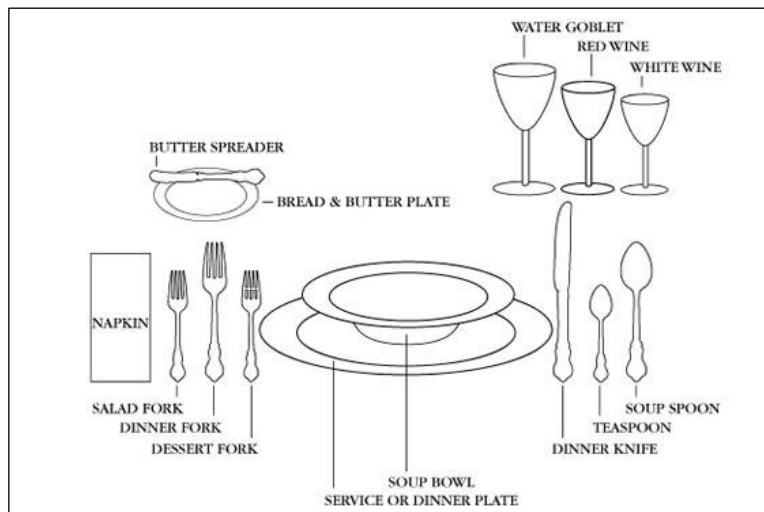
## ORDERING

- Take your lead from your host.
- As the employer will be paying for the meal, order from the mid-priced offerings on the menu.
- When dining out, order foods that can be eaten with utensils.
- Eat lightly and avoid messy food. You will be doing more talking than eating and you don’t want to be wearing your lunch during the afternoon interviews.
- Do not order alcohol! If the host orders a bottle of wine and insists, only have ONE glass.

## TABLE SETTINGS

Place settings can be confusing. The general rule for silverware is to work from the outside in as the meal progresses. The dinner plate is at the center of the place setting. When finished eating, do not push the plate away from you. Between bites, your fork and knife are placed on the plate, handles to the right, not touching the table.

Which drink is yours? This is one of the first decisions at the dinner table because oftentimes, napkins are in the glass when you arrive at the table. Here is an easy tip to help you remember. Hold both hands in front of you, palms facing each other. Using the tips of your thumb and forefinger, make circles on each hand. The remaining three fingers in each hand point upwards. Your left hand will form a "b" and your right hand will form a "d". Bread (b) is on the left, and drink (d) is on the right. If your neighbor has already taken your bread plate or drink, quietly ask the waiter for another.



Wait for the host to unfold his napkin before unfolding yours. In a banquet setting or at a restaurant, simply place your napkin in your lap as soon as you are seated. Put napkin on lap as soon as host does. Napkins remain on your lap until completion of meal. If you excuse yourself from the table, loosely fold the napkin and place it to the left of your plate. Do not refold your napkin or wad it up on the table either. Do not place the napkin in the seat of your chair. You don't want to wipe your mouth with a napkin that has been left on the seat.

## UTENSILS

- Pick up silverware from the outside in – toward your plate
- Do not make a fist around the handle of the utensil.
- Continental style: cut food one bite at a time, use the fork in left hand, tines down, to spear the food and bring to mouth.
- American Standard style: cut food a few bites at a time, lay the knife across the plate (sharp edges toward you), and switch fork to right hand to eat.

- Do you talk with your hands? For the safety of everyone around you at the table, please put your knife down and do not use it to gesture.
- Once used, silverware should not touch the table.
- When you are finished, fork and knife are placed diagonally on the plate (think 4 o'clock) with the fork closest to you and the knife, again, blade in. This signals to the wait staff that they may remove your plate.
- If you drop a utensil, pick it up and ask for a new one. If you can't reach it, let the server know it's down there.

#### **SERVICE**

- Wait for your host/hostess to pick up his/her fork to eat first.
- Wait until everyone at the table has been served before beginning to eat.
- Never reach across the table for something, always ask for it to be passed.
- Salt and pepper are always passed together.
- Food is served from the left and dishes are cleared from the right.
- Everything gets passed to the right. If you are first to take the bread basket, offer to your left first, take your piece, then pass to the right.

#### **BREAD**

- Bread should be broken into bite-sized pieces, not cut.
- Butter, spreads, or dips should be transferred from the serving dish to your plate before spreading or eating.
- Butter only the piece you are preparing to eat. When butter is served, put some on your bread plate and use as needed. Place the butter knife horizontally on bread plate.

#### **SOUP**

- Soup bowl - May be placed on the dinner plate. If you need to set your soup spoon down, you may put it on the saucer/platter.
- Spoon soup away from you to eat. Sip, not slurp, from the edge of the spoon. Do not insert the whole bowl of the spoon into your mouth.
- If soup is too hot to eat, stir it gently to let it cool in bowl. Do not blow on it.
- It is proper to tip a soup bowl slightly to get all of the soup.

#### **SALAD**

- Cut your salad if the leaves are too large.

#### **WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED EATING**

- Lay your fork and knife (sharp side of knife inward), at the 4:00/10:00 position.
- Leave plate where it is – don't push it away.
- Used napkin goes next to your plate, not on top of the plate.
- Do not ask for a doggy bag or to-go bag.
- Do not ask for a toothpick.

#### **USE PROPER PROTOCOL FOR INTRODUCTIONS**

- Shake hands and maintain eye contact.
- Rise from your seat.
- Remember names (repetition helps).
- Use appropriate titles to address people.
- Men are introduced to women.
- Younger individuals are introduced to senior individuals.
- Unofficial people are introduced to people with titles.

