

DINING & BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

A concise guide examining the do's and don'ts of business etiquette



Employers may want to see you in a more social situation to see how you conduct yourself, particularly if the job for which you are interviewing requires a certain standard of conduct with clients and superiors. You could be critically scrutinized on your table manners and conduct. The meal is a time to visit and interact, and this is always more important than the function of eating.

General Dining Etiquette

Punctuality

Be on time - no one wants to be kept waiting. If it is an unavoidable delay, try to contact the person. Keep in mind that you never know when you will encounter heavy traffic, wrecks, construction or other delays. Always allow extra time particularly if you are going to an interview. For interviews you should arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview time.



Greetings and Introductions

When meeting someone, rise if you are seated, smile, extend your hand and repeat the other person's name in your greeting. A good handshake is important - it should be firm and held for three to four seconds. Today, in the business world, it is not necessary to wait for a female to initiate the handshake. Females/males should both be ready to initiate the handshake.

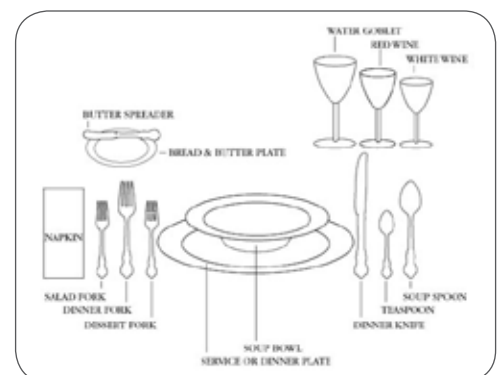
Introducing people is one of the most important acts in business life, yet few people know how to do it. Be sure to explain who people are and use their full names. Also do not assume that everyone wants to be called by his or her first name - wait until you are told to use a first name.

Sitting Down

Wait until invited to be seated, or after host sits down. Do not place any bags, purses, sunglasses, cell phones, or briefcases on the table.

Table Setting

It can be very confusing to be presented with a variety of eating utensils. (See below) Remember the guideline "to start at the outside and work your way in." If you have been given two forks, which are the same size, begin with the fork on the outside. Many restaurants use the same size of fork for both the salad and main course.





Glasses & Beverages

A variety of types and sizes of glasses can be used throughout the meal. Remember your items to drink will be located in the area above your knife and spoon. Alcohol*, if consumed, should be in moderation. In most cases you may have a drink during the social hour and wine(s) with the dinner. You do not have to finish your drink, and slowly sipping is recommended. If you do not want an alcoholic drink, politely decline. Coffee cups may be located to the right of the knife and spoon.

**Please refer business dining etiquette for guidelines on alcohol in interview situations.*

Napkin

When dining with others, place your napkin on your lap after everyone at your table has been seated. Do not open your napkin in mid-air; As you remove your napkin from the table begin to open below the table level and place on your lap. If you must leave a meal, do so between courses, and place your napkin on your chair or to the left of your plate. When a meal is completed, place your napkin to the right of your plate - never on the plate. If your napkin falls on the floor and it is within easy reach, retrieve it. If you are unable to retrieve it without drawing attention to yourself, ask the server for another one.

Ordering

Do not take a lot of time to order. Others are waiting. Order simply - do not customize your order excessively as this can attract unnecessary and negative attention. Follow your host's lead. Avoid foods that are difficult to eat and/or messy. If you are your host's guest, select an item that is in the mid-price range, easy to eat and one you will enjoy. Consider asking your host/hostess for a recommendation before making your decision. If you are the host, it is courteous to take the lead in ordering appetizers and wine, if these are to be served.



Serving

Wait for everyone at your table to be served before beginning to eat. However, if an individual who has not been served encourages you to begin eating, you may do so. Eat slowly while waiting for their food to be served.

Utensils

Do not make a fist around the handle of the utensil. This is a child's way of holding a utensil - not an adult's. There are two acceptable ways to use the knife and fork: Continental Fashion and American Standard. Continental Fashion: The diner cuts food, usually one bite at a time, and uses fork in left hand, tines pointing down, to

Etiquette Tip!

Dessert utensils may be found placed across the top of the place setting.

Place these utensils down for use after the main course is removed with the fork to the left and spoon to the right.

spear food and bring it to mouth. American Standard: A few bites are cut, knife is laid across top of plate, sharp edge toward you, and fork is switched to right hand, tines up to bring the food to the mouth. Do not cut more than two or three bites at a time. Do not use both hands simultaneously to hold utensils and cups. Keep utensils in the same order they appear on the table. Do not rearrange them to accommodate yourself if you are left-handed. If you drop a utensil, do not pick it up - leave on floor and ask server for another.

The 'Pass'

Do not reach across the table for an item - politely ask the person next to you to pass. Pass "community food" such as the breadbasket, salt and pepper, and salad dressing to the right. Always pass the salt and pepper together. It is considered rude to use it first before passing it to the person who asked for it. When passing items such as a creamer, syrup pitcher, or gravy boat, pass it with the handle pointing toward the recipient. Set any passed item directly on the table instead of passing hand-to-hand. Once using or taking from a passed item, set it in a "central" location easily accessible by others if possible - do not keep it close to you.

Soup & Bread

When eating soup, think of making a circle: Spoon away from you, bring around to your mouth and back to the bowl. Soup is taken from the side of the soup spoon - it is not inserted into your mouth. Bread and rolls should never be eaten whole. Break into smaller, more manageable pieces, buttering a few bites at a time. Toast and garlic bread, however, may be eaten as whole pieces since they are usually already buttered. If served a hot muffin or biscuit, you may break in half crosswise, add butter, and put it back together. When ready to eat it, break it into small pieces.



Seasonings & Sweeteners

Always taste your food first before using any seasonings. Do not assume it needs to be seasoned. Do not be excessive with sugar or sweetener packets. The rule of thumb is no more than two packets per meal. Do not crumble the packets but partially tear off a corner, empty the contents and place to the side.

Eating

If encountering something unchewable or undesirable, hold your napkin up to your mouth and discreetly dispose of it. Place your napkin on the side and quietly ask your waiter for a new one. An alternative is to politely excuse yourself to the restroom while keeping it in your mouth, and dispose of it there. Toothpicks should be used discreetly and in private; not at the table. A good idea is to go to the restroom after dining to check your teeth and freshen up. When sharing a plate of chips or veggies with a dip or sauce with others, apply the "Single



Dip Rule” - that is, dip only once; do not insert a food item you have taken a bite from back into a shared bowl of dip or sauce.

Spilling

If you spill food, discreetly retrieve it with your knife or fork and place it at the side of your plate. You may also discreetly dip your napkin into your water glass and wipe a small spill from your clothing. If food falls on the floor, leave it. If it falls on the table and is a big piece, use your fork and move it to a corner of your plate.

Finishing

When finished with a course, leave your plates in the same position that they were presented to you. In other words, do not push your plates away or stack them.

Paying the Bill

You should prearrange how the bill is being paid. If being treated by someone, always thank them. Remember to tip your waiter appropriately: 15% for moderate service; 20% for excellent service.



General Business Etiquette

A good point to remember in business etiquette is everyone should be treated with equal courtesy and respect. Administrative assistants or office support staff are important people and should never be taken for granted. Treat them courteously in all your transactions. Treat people the way you wish to be treated. Gender no longer needs to be the deciding factor in everyday events. Business etiquette should be a give and take, to assist each other when needed, and show consideration for others.

Guest

If you are someone’s guest at a meal, ask the person what he/she recommends. By doing this, you will learn price range guidelines and have an idea of what to order. Usually order an item in the mid price range. Also keep in mind, the person who typically initiates the meal will pay. Remember to thank them for the meal.



Restaurant Staff

Wait staff, servers, Maitre d’(check spelling), etc. are your allies. They can assist you with whatever problem may arise. Quietly get their attention and speak to them about the issue.

Jacket

As a general rule, follow the lead of the host before removing your jacket. If the host keeps theirs on, keep yours on. If it is very hot weather, it is acceptable to ask their permission to remove your jacket. This applies to both men and women. Keep in mind that some restaurants require that customers keep their jackets on during meals.

Personal Hygiene

Understand that your behavior at the table can negatively affect others' dining experiences. Do not conduct personal hygiene activities at the dining table. Do not stir your food items together on your plate, or play with your food with your fork. Do not apply makeup, or comb or run your fingers through your hair, or pick at your clothing or body. Never blow your nose at the table, or in other social or public settings. Excuse yourself from the table and go to the restroom or a private area, and minimize the noise you make. While it is appropriate to dab your nose discreetly with a paper napkin at the table, never use your cloth dinner napkin. Put used tissue/napkin in your pocket or purse - don't leave it on the table for others to be forced to view, or in your chair for a server to remove. To sneeze, turn your head away from the table and cover your mouth. Don't clear your throat loudly.

Etiquette Tip!

Cultural courtesy is becoming very important as more business is being conducted in and with foreign countries. Be sure to research the customs and culture of the country with which you will have business transactions.

Topics of Conversation

Remember why you're there. Consider the purpose/context of the dining experience. Is it part of a job interview process? A formal or informal gathering of co-workers? Pay attention to the thread of conversation and participate when appropriate. Don't interrupt or repeatedly turn the topic of conversation to you or your interests. Try to choose universal topics of conversation in which all may have an interest. Can't think of anything to say? Listen attentively, and ask questions to generate conversation. Avoid a loud tone of voice. Do not use profanities. Be sensitive to others before initiating conversation on topics that may not be suitable - avoid anything of a vulgar, graphic, or otherwise unpleasant nature. If you are someone else's guest, even if part of a group, don't criticize the food, restaurant, etc. - this can cause embarrassment on the part of the "host."

Technology

Put technology away at the dinner table or other social gatherings. Again, remember why you are there - to share an experience with others, to listen and converse in person. Turning your attention to your cell phone to text or play a game is rude. It implies that fellow guests or the dining experience aren't interesting to you. So, turn off cell phones and pagers, or put on vibrate only if you must take a call - and in that case, excuse yourself from the table and find a private area. Do not let devices ring and then turn off after checking to see who is contacting you, as this is distracting for others as well.



Smoking

Be aware of smoking policies. You should never smoke during an interview, at a meal or when you are aware that the other person's pleasure does not include tobacco smoke.

Types of Dining Scenarios...



Lunch Interview

Order only from the lunch menu, and then, not the most expensive item! The expectation is that the employer will pay for the meal; however, you may offer. DO NOT order alcohol (even if interviewer does) and DO NOT order foods that are messy to eat or require you to hold the food with your hands.

Pre-Set Meals

With a pre-set meal the host/hostess has already made the selections and the individuals are served. If allergic, religious or vegetarian issues arise, quietly deal with these as the server is at your side. For vegetarian ask if you may have a vegetable plate; with allergies or religion, provide the server with options (e.g., if allergic to shellfish - ask if they have fish, and be ready to order a specific kind). This lets the server know what you can eat. Always eat a little of all items served to you.

Buffet

With a pre-set meal the host/hostess has already made the selections and the individuals are served. If allergic, religious or vegetarian issues arise, quietly deal with these as the server is at your side. For vegetarian ask if you may have a vegetable plate; with allergies or religion, provide the server with options (e.g., if allergic to shellfish - ask if they have fish, and be ready to order a specific kind). This lets the server know what you can eat. Always eat a little of all items served to you.

Receptions

Most receptions or social hours are for the purpose of mingling and making contacts whether for job leads, as part of an interview, or an employee entertaining clients. When you enter the reception observe the layout of the room. Seeing the room layout gives you a clue on how to proceed at the reception. If no tables are available, you should only have a drink or your food in your hand - never both. You should be prepared to greet and shake hands with individuals. If having a

Etiquette Tip!

Nametags serve an important purpose and should be worn on the right hand side of your front shoulder area, so that when you shake hands with someone, your line of vision travels naturally up their arm to their nametag (i.e., in that most people are right-handed)

drink hold it in your left hand to keep your right hand dry and ready to shake hands. If eating hold your plate on the right hand and eat with the left hand. When someone approaches, you are able to switch the plate to your left hand and your right hand is clean and ready to shake. If tables are available you may have your drink and food together. However, always be ready to stand and greet people. Networking and/or mingling are an important aspect of a business function, even if the event is described as a social gathering. Be sure to greet or introduce yourself to the host/hostess. Spend a few minutes conversing with them on topics that relate to the event or to their business. To move on you can politely say, "I know you need to talk with your other guests." Connect with as many attendees as possible. Do not interrupt people; wait until they include you, or there is a break in the conversation and you can introduce yourself. Start conversations by asking someone about themselves or their job, as most people enjoy talking about themselves. Do not look around the room for your next contact as you converse with someone. Focus eye contact on that individual and after a time, politely excuse yourself to move on to someone else.



Office Parties

Office parties are good opportunities to improve morale and build good will. Keep in mind these are people who see you every day and they will remember a lapse in behavior. Be aware of your alcoholic consumption and do not embarrass yourself. Do not discuss business - this is a social occasion and an opportunity to learn more about your co-workers.

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