



The RIGHT FORK

An etiquette brief on dining etiquette by Civility Experts Worldwide

Introduction

When you were looking for a job, did you go to networking events? Were you nervous?

Have you ever met a potential employer (or new client) at a restaurant or coffee shop? And, did you think twice about eating/drinking in front of that person? Or, were you nervous about what to do when the bill came?

Have you ever dined with a co-worker or higher up and found yourself thinking, “Shish, he/she is kind of messy,” or “Yuck, I can’t believe he/she just did that”?

Many, many otherwise confident people feel nervous in dining and social settings. And, when your dream job, a promotion, or making a good impression to someone important to you is the priority, knowing how to conduct yourself in a polished professional way, in both casual and formal dining settings, can help you feel more confident and portray competence and credibility to others.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at www.etiquettrainingtoolkits.com

Lesson K2L1: Business Dining (Excerpt)

Many, many people of varying ages, personalities and backgrounds, are nervous in dining and mixing settings. And, because we are often preoccupied worrying about where our knife is, which side our bread plate is on, etc. we can lose track of what is important. The idea behind learning the seemingly common sense, and sometimes even silly, details about dining is that you can walk into any dining situation and immediately feel comfortable, portray confidence, and focus on whatever business or social issues including conversation with your table mates, needs to be addressed.

So what is the big deal about using the right fork anyway? The experts at COCC maintain that modern dining etiquette is not about being perfect or “prissy” and you certainly don’t want to reinforce old notions that manners are snobby and reserved for “high class” places only. Although table manners may not be important in the big scheme of things, they are important for a few moments in certain settings. Those moments pass quickly and how you behave in those few seconds can sometimes make or break a positive impression that others make about you.

Dining in formal settings or when under pressure can be intimidating. Knowing the nuances of dining and specific techniques for handling utensils and difficult foods can help you feel more confident. However, the most important thing to remember about business dining is that you should always be more focused on your guests, or those you are dining with, more than you are on the food. If you are respectful and a good conversationalist people will usually forgive a dining faux pas. But, if you have poor table manners and you are a terrible listener or make someone else uncomfortable, people will remember every awkward gesture and certainly all the burps, slurps, and spills.

DID YOU KNOW?

- It is no longer necessary (although it is still okay) that a man rise from his chair, every time a woman leaves or returns to the table. It is always good manners for a person so acknowledge another persons departure or return (this can be done visually) but he/she doesn't have to stand up. Also, if you would rise for a woman, you should also consider rising for a man.
- Regarding place cards: if the host has arranged seating you should in fact sit where you are placed. Often hosts seat people beside certain people for specific reasons. Also, in cases where a food allergy or special food

Dining Etiquette Basics

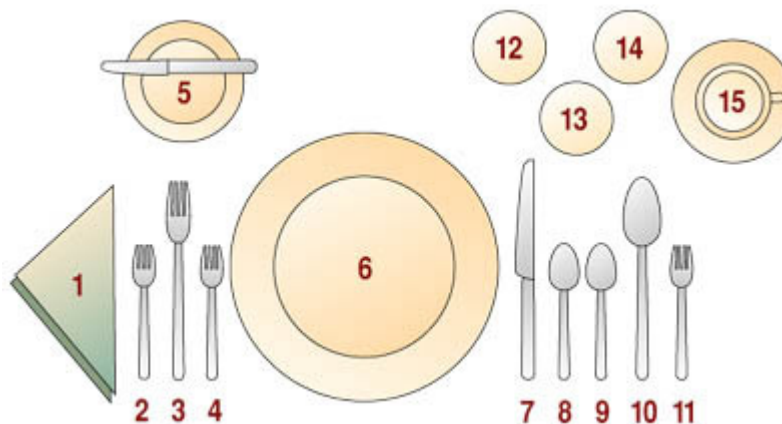
item has been arranged, the name/place card on the table is the serviceperson's only means of following directions from the host.

- When you are shaking hands with people at a round table, you should really walk around the table to meet them, rather than reach across the table to shake their hand.



Let's test your basic knowledge. Here is a typical North American formal table-setting. See if you can identify each item in the place setting.

TABLE SETTING



- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 8. |
| 2. | 9. |
| 3. | 10. |
| 4. | 11. |
| 5. | 12. |
| 6. | 13. |
| 7. | 15. |

The elements of a formal table setting are as follows:

The Napkin

For more formal dining situations, paper napkins are usually replaced with linen napkins. Regardless of what type of napkin is used, the rules for how to use them are the same.

Napkins may be found:

- folded and placed to the left of a place setting
- folded and placed across the dinner plate
- tucked into a wine glass
- to the right of the dinner plate with utensils lying on top

Did you know: The first napkins were lumps of raw dough used by the Spartans. They wiped their fingers in the dough. Later, a piece of bread was used. The Romans had a large cloth called a Mappa that they spread over the couch where they reclined to eat. After a meal, this cloth was gathered up with the leftover food in it to take home. This was the first “Doggie Bag.”

*This tip provided by Civility Experts Worldwide

After the host or guest of honor is seated, you would fold your napkin up to about 2/3 of the way so that there is about 1-1.5 inches of napkin that forms a flap (like an envelope). You place the napkin on your lap with the open side towards your stomach.

When you need to wipe your fingers, slip your hands between the folds of the napkin; this ensures grease and other messes remain inside the napkin rather than on your shirt sleeves or the table linen.

If you need to leave the table during the meal, put your napkin on the back of your chair and push your chair into the table. When you return to the table, simply place the napkin back on your lap. If you are leaving the table and never coming back, put the napkin to the left of your dinner plate.

Napkins should not be used to mop your brow, to dab at lipstick, to wipe up items that might have spilled on the floor, or to blow your nose. If a napkin is dirty or unsightly, ask the serviceperson to exchange it for a new one.

Utensils

The number of utensils that are placed and used in a place setting depends on what items (called courses) are being served. Typically, knives and spoons as well as appetizer/ pre-entrée utensils such as fish forks, go on the right and forks

go on the left. Most often you will start from the outermost right and use the utensils in the order they are placed.

In North America, the utensils (such as a fork and a spoon) that are set above the place setting or over the dinner plate are intended for coffee/tea and dessert. Sometimes, you will find the coffee spoon served on the coffee cup saucer, and the dessert fork/spoon might be to the right of the dinner plate. For Continental dining this can be a bit confusing because Europeans often eat salad after the entrée in which case when there is dessert and salad (and maybe cheese/fruit after that) served, you might see a dinner fork, and then two smaller forks between the dinner plate and the dinner fork.

Usually, noting whether you have been given a fork or a spoon for dessert provides a hint as to what you may be served. Pies and solid desserts will usually come with a fork, while custards, ice creams, and other soft desserts will be served with a spoon.

Glasses

Each person's glassware is set on the right side of the table setting. Glassware is typically set in the order it will be used, for example, on the outermost right side closest to the spoons would be a small aperitif glass, next might be a white wine glass (maybe to go with the fish course) then a red wine glass to go with the entrée (maybe beef is the main course), then a water glass, and then maybe a liqueur or port glass, or a brandy snifter.

Generally you would not touch anything at the table, including water, until the host or guest of honor has been seated.

Hint: How do you remember that your glass is on the right? Make a circle with the index finger and the thumb of your right hand. Extend the rest of your fingers straight up. This makes the letter "d" for drink. Do the same with the other hand and make the letter "b" for bread. This way, you know that your bread is on the left-hand side.

***This tip from Lew Bayer at Civility Experts Worldwide

Under Plate or Charger Plate

Most higher-end restaurants will serve dinner plate and larger bowls of pasta etc with a larger plate under them. Or, some establishments will pre-set tables with a charger (usually silver or gold or fancy decoration) plate which is quite large and serves as sort of a plate-placemat. The service people will put the appetizer plate and entrée and other courses on top of the charger plate which will remain at the place setting until after the main courses are served.

Bread and Butter Plate

The bread and butter plate, which is usually accompanied with a bread and butter knife, (smaller than a regular knife with a rounded end- and sometimes no blade), is placed to the left of the place setting. Sometimes a bun will be pre-set on the bread and butter plate. Typically the bread and butter plate will be removed after the entrée is finished.

Soup Plate/Bowl/Cup

In North America soup is usually served as a cup, a small portion in a small bowl with no handles, or in a bowl, which is larger and sometimes served with an under plate.

NOTE:

Soup spoons tell stories, for example- a round spoon with a deep bowl is usually an indication that a cream or thick soup will be served. A shallower, more oval spoon is usually used when a bouillon or broth soup is served.

See notes on eating soup, “All Souped Up” in Expanded version of this lesson.

Dishes

The smallest plate at the table is the bread and butter plate. It goes in the upper left-hand side of the place setting. Usually, the butter spreader, the smallest knife, is placed horizontally across the top of the bread and butter plate or on the right-hand side in a vertical position. The next size of plate is the dessert plate or salad plate. The largest plate is the dinner plate. In a formal dinner, there will be a large plate in the center of your place setting called a “place” plate or “charger” plate. Charger plates are for decorative purposes.

Eating Styles

Did you know: In Medieval times, the fork had two prongs and was used to lift meat from an open fire? By the 17th century, this had increased to three prongs, as did the dinner fork. By 18th century, forks had four prongs.

Utensils and how people use them is different depending on what country you're in. For example, in North America and most of Europe, people generally use knives and forks, however in parts of the Middle East; people have specific etiquette for eating with their hands. Similarly, in some parts of Asia, chopsticks are the utensil of choice.

Dining Etiquette Basics

In North America there are two popular styles of eating, one is called American or “zig-zag” and the other is called “European” or “Continental” style dining.

In American style dining, a right-handed person would pick up their fork in their left hand and knife in the right hand. Then, he/she would cut food with the knife (and we tend to cut a lot of food when we should really only cut one or two pieces) and then we put the knife down (sometimes on the table which you never want to do) and we switch our fork to our strong right hand.

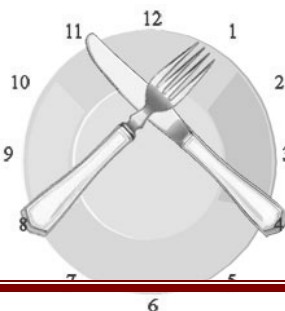
We tend to then put our heads down and shovel. We take a lot of food on the front of the fork and eat quite quickly. If we need to cut we switch our fork back to the left hand, pick our knife up in our right hand, and cut. Then we switch back and continue shoveling. (In some cases we can't find our knife or we're too lazy so we just use the side of our fork to cut- something you really shouldn't do)

In Europe in particular, but also in many other countries around the world, people dine using Continental style. In Continental style, a right-handed person picks up their fork in their right hand and their knife in the left hand. Then the diner cuts a piece or two, used the fork to stab the food, or uses the knife to push and stack food onto the back of the fork. The diner then rests his/her wrists on the table while holding both utensils.

Technically, neither Continental nor American style dining is more correct. However, for formal social or business settings where the food is not necessarily the focus, etiquette experts suggest that eating Continental style helps a diner present him/herself as polished and more polite. This is because generally there is less distraction (switching hands, moving utensils) and diners are better able to make conversation (smaller bites, less often caught with a mouthful of food). In addition, Continental style dining tends to take a little longer, the portions are smaller, and there is more eye contact between diners.

Silence Service Signals

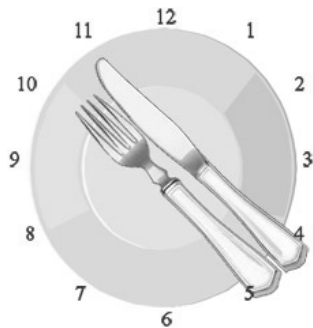
Experienced diners know that by placing utensils a certain way you can silently indicate to servers if you are resting or finished eating. These signals help service people know when to interrupt you and when to clear your plates or offer service.



Resting Position

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Dining Etiquette Basics



Finished position

One of the main reasons handles are placed at the “4” (on the imaginary plate clock) is because these days many service people are trained to both clear and set from the right side of the diner. If the utensil handles are at the “4” a serviceperson can reach in easily and in one gesture place a thumb over the utensils (so they don’t fall on diner’s lap or on the floor) while the fingers scoop up the plate.

TIP SHEET

THE BASICS OF BUSINESS DINING

Basically there are some simple things to remember about dining etiquette that apply to every situation. Here are ten handy tips:

1. Do not touch anything on the table, meaning your napkin, wine, water or buns-anything until the “hostess” or “head of the table” has been seated. In lieu of a hostess, the most senior person by age in social situations and by rank in business situation would function as the “host” in business scenarios. You should wait until this person gives cues as to where others should sit, when the meal starts, who will initiate toasts or speeches and the overall pace of the meal.
2. Someone may bless the meal. Even if you don’t typically say “grace” yourself, it is polite to sit in silence if someone else does. If you’re the one responsible for saying grace, be aware that others may not be comfortable, so keep it short. No one needs a sermon on an empty stomach.
3. When the host does so, take your napkin and put it in your lap. Fold the napkin in half with the opening towards your stomach, this way you can slip your fingers between the folds to wipe off grease or food bits and your neighbors won’t have to see all the “treasure” in your napkin. Use the outside edges of your napkin to “dab”, not wipe your mouth and then place the napkin back on your lap. If you must leave during the meal but you will return, place your napkin on your chair. If you will not be returning, place your napkin to the left of your plate.

4. Your bread plate is on the left and your glassware is on the right. If someone inadvertently takes your side plate or glass, simply ask the server to bring you

Dining Etiquette Basics

another. If you are served either hot or cold soup, use the larger spoon, which should be on the outside right of your place setting. On some occasions the soup spoon will be served with the soup so don't panic if you don't have one.

5. Always pass to the right, counterclockwise. If you reach for something, maybe buns or butter, be sure to pass the item first and wait until it comes back around before you help yourself. This also applies to salt and pepper, which, incidentally, should always be passed together. Handle them from the bottom when you pass them.

6. If you wish to add salt and pepper to your food, do so only after having at least taken a bite or two. It can be incredibly insulting to a chef who has toiled over a meal if you automatically add condiments to the food without having tasted it first.

7. Pace yourself. Take small bites and chew with your mouth closed. Only make comments on the food if they are positive and try to engage in periodic conversation during the meal.

8. If you pause between bites, be sure to put your utensils all the way on the plate. Don't let them dangle or lean off the plate and try not to put dirty utensils on the table or the linen.

9. When you are finished eating, don't push your plates to the center of the table or stack them, especially in a formal dining situation. Instead, lay your utensils across the plate and wait for the server to remove them. Your napkin should stay in your lap until all the food, including dessert, is off the table.

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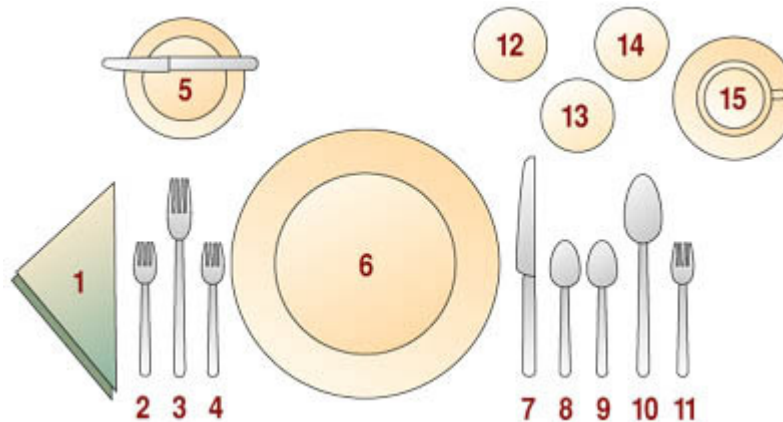
When dining in Japan (or even in a Japanese restaurant):

Before you start eating, say "Itadakimasu," meaning "I will receive" and end the meal with "gochiso sama deshita," which means "thank you for the feast".

Something that is not considered rude in Japan is slurping. It is okay to slurp when eating noodles or soups; it shows that the food is very delicious. However, burping is considered to be bad manners and is very rude. It is also rude to yawn while you are talking to someone (same as in America) and blow your nose in public. See [table manners](#) for more information www.renton.wednet.edu

For additional tips on tipping, eating bread and buns, wine etiquette, navigating the buffet as well as quizzes and tip sheets- please see the expanded version of this brief- available at www.culturalcompetence.ca (click on the shopping cart)

ANSWER KEY- Table setting



- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 14. Napkin | 21. Teaspoon |
| 15. Salad fork | 22. Teaspoon |
| 16. Dinner fork | 23. Soup spoon |
| 17. Dessert fork | 24. Cocktail fork |
| 18. Bread-and-butter plate,
with spreader | 25. Water glass |
| 19. Dinner plate | 26. Red-wine glass |
| 20. Dinner knife | 27. White-wine glass |
| | 15. Coffee cup and saucer |

Note: In the above diagram, the number 8 teaspoon could be replaced with a salad knife and the number 4 fork and number 9 spoon could be above the dinner plate. Much depends on the menu.

If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit www.etiquetetrainingtoolkits.com where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.