

# Dining Etiquette

## Setting the Table

There are many different ways to set the table. We will go over the different types of settings and utensils in class. Here are some of the basics of setting an acceptable table.

- ❖ The napkin is folded and placed on the left side of the plate with the crease pointing to the left side away from the plate.
- ❖ Forks are placed on top of or to the right of the napkin. If you are having a salad before the main course, the salad fork is farther away from the plate than the regular fork. If your salad is being served after your entrée then you place it closer to the plate than the regular fork. Usually salad forks are shorter than dinner forks.
- ❖ Knives should be placed on the right side of the plate with the blade facing inward towards the plate. (This is because in the days of knights and kings, it was a sign of friendship to have the blade pointing away from the knight's fellow diners. It meant there wouldn't be any rough stuff during the dinner. If the blade was pointing towards you, watch out!)
- ❖ Spoons should be placed to the right of the knives farther away from the plates. Soup spoons have a larger bowl than teaspoons.
- ❖ Dessert spoons or forks can be placed at the top of the plate horizontally with the end pointing to the right.
- ❖ Water and wine glasses should be on the diner's right at the top of the plate over the spoon and knife.
- ❖ The bread plate is placed to the top left of the dinner plate over the forks along with the butter knife.

**Remember ... Each course has a corresponding utensil and you always select the utensils from the outside and work towards the plate. The utensils that get used first are furthest from both sides of the plate.**



## Table Manners

Good table manners say a lot about the type of person you are. There is a lot to know about good table manners. Sometimes, some of them may seem silly and trite, but they are an important part of the good manners code. It is worth the time it takes to learn good table manners.

Someday soon you will have the chance to have dinner with the parents of the boy or girl you have wanted to go out with for years. Or you may have lunch with an important college admissions officer. Or you may be having dinner with someone you want to work for. Your good table manners will make a lasting impression. If you dine with dignity, you will look polished and make everyone, including yourself, feel more comfortable.

Never underestimate the good impression you make when you use nice table manners!

Here is a list of some basic table manners to remember from the time you sit down to eat until you are excused from the table.

- ❖ Wash your hands (and face if needed) before you sit down to eat.
- ❖ Take off your hat at the table.
- ❖ When you sit down put your napkin in your lap. Don't flap it around, just open it up and lay it on your lap. Don't put it under your chin unless you are age three or younger.
- ❖ Wait for your host (the eldest woman at the table or the person whom invited you to dinner) to start eating before you start your meal. If that person tells you to start without them, you may.
- ❖ If you are not sure how to eat a certain food, watch how your hostess does it. Follow her lead and you should be fine.
- ❖ When eating soup, do not slurp. Spoon the soup away from yourself and up to your lips. You may tip the bowl slightly away from yourself to spoon up the last bit. Never pick up the bowl and drink from it. You may, however, drink clear broth if it is served to you in a cup. When you are finished with your soup you may leave the spoon on the soup plate under the bowl (if there isn't one then in leave the spoon in the bowl).
- ❖ When food is passed around the table offer the food first to the person to your left by holding the food serving dish. Then help yourself to the food and then pass the serving dish to the right. Always use the serving utensils if they are offered and then pass them along with the serving dish.

- ❖ Never reach in front of others for an item. Always ask, "Would you please pass the pickled frog legs? Thank you"
- ❖ When someone asks you to "pass the salt", make sure that you pass the person both the salt and the pepper. Place both of them on the table next to the person who asked for it. Do not hand it to them. (If you ask why, we'll tell you that it is one of life's little mysteries!)
- ❖ Again, if there is more than one fork or spoon, start with the one farthest from the plate. Work your way inward toward your plate.
- ❖ Never point with your fork, spoon, or knife. Don't use them to make a point (pardon the pun). Use them as quietly as possible. That means no clanging or banging against the side of your bowl or plate.
- ❖ Hold your fork and spoon like a pencil, not a toothbrush.
- ❖ When cutting meat, don't cut the entire piece at once. Cut two or three pieces at a time, eat them, and then cut a few more and so on until you are finished.
- ❖ Be patient with your knife. Use your fork to hold the meat in place and gently saw it with your knife. Don't push too hard. When you are not using your knife, rest it on your plate, not the table.
- ❖ Take small bites of your food. If your cheeks are bulging when you chew then you have bitten off more than is acceptable.
- ❖ Remember to always chew with your mouth closed!
- ❖ When dining at a friend's house, take the same portion as the rest of the family. Don't ask for seconds until everyone has had firsts.
- ❖ Try at least a couple of bites of everything on your plate. Feel free to compliment, but never criticize the food.

- ❖ No belching or burping! If you absolutely cannot avoid it, keep your mouth closed and say, "Excuse me."
- ❖ Don't use your fingers to push food on your fork. However, you may use your bread or your knife if you do not have any bread.
- ❖ Don't talk with your mouth full. We want to hear your news, but please wait until you have swallowed your food.
- ❖ Keep your elbows off the table while you are eating. When the dishes are cleared it is safe for you to rest your elbows on the table.
- ❖ Take small sips of your milk or water. Don't gulp it. Don't use it to wash down your food.
- ❖ Use your napkin a lot. Gently blot your mouth. Do not use it like a washcloth or handkerchief. Don't crumple it. When the meal is over lay it next to your plate. Don't refold it. If you leave the table during the meal, place your napkin on your seat and not on the table.
- ❖ When you're finished with your main course, place your fork and knife next to each other (knife on top) in a diagonal line across the top of your plate with the blade of the knife facing in. (Imagine that your plate is a clock. The knife and fork should make a diagonal line 10 - 3.)
- ❖ Don't just leave the table when you are finished eating. Ask your host if you may please be excused.
- ❖ Thank the hostess (even your mom or dad) for the meal when you are finished. Be sure to clear your plate (take your plate from the table into the kitchen and put in/by the sink) if that is what is expected.
- ❖ While eating slowly is good for your digestion, you do not want to eat too slow or too fast. Try to keep pace with the host and others.

## Bread and Rolls

Many meals are served with bread or dinner rolls. There is a definite "right way" to enjoy a roll. It is called the BBE method (Break, Butter & Eat.)

- ❖ Take a roll and put it on your bread plate (the small plate above the fork). If there is not bread plate, use your dinner plate.
- ❖ Say, "Please pass the butter." Take a pat of butter from the butter dish and put it on the edge of your bread plate. Break off a small piece of bread, put a little butter on it and eat it. An average dinner roll or piece of bread should be broken three or four times before it is finished.
- ❖ Do not cut your bread with a knife.
- ❖ Do not butter your bread all at once.
- ❖ Do not take the butter directly off of the butter dish and butter your roll. Remember to put it on your bread plate or dinner plate first. Use your butter knife, if one has been provided.

## Funny Foods

Some foods are going to be awkward to eat no matter how you slice them. Here are some tips:

- ❖ Fried chicken: At home or at a casual dinner, you may use your fingers if your hostess does. Take your cue from them. At a formal dinner, you should use a knife and fork.
- ❖ Spaghetti: Twirl the pasta around your fork. Use a pasta spoon if one has been provided.

- ❖ Corn on the cob: You may eat it with your fingers.
- ❖ Pizza: You may eat it with your fingers. It's easier and less messy to tuck in the point and fold it in half if the pizza slice is loaded with goodies.
- ❖ Melon: Watermelon is eaten by hand only at picnics. Otherwise use your fork and knife or a spoon. If a half of a cantaloupe or melon is served, use a spoon. When fruit is served in sections you can use a knife, fork or spoon.
- ❖ Oysters on the half shell: This is fun! Pick up the shell by hand and scrape underneath the oyster with a fork, preferably a cocktail fork. Bring the shell to your lips and slurp. Sadly, the noise cannot be avoided, but don't exaggerate it!
- ❖ Soft shell crabs: Eat the whole thing, shell and all, with a fork and knife, unless it is in a sandwich.
- ❖ Fish with bones: Take out as many of the bones as possible with your fork and knife. If you take a bite and find little bones, push them to the front of your mouth with as little fuss as possible and then on to your fork. Put them on the side of your plate. This rule applies to crab cakes or anything else with shells.
- ❖ Spare ribs and steak: There is no neat way to eat ribs so you may pick them up. However, when you eat a T-bone steak, use your fork and knife to cut the meat away from the bone.
- ❖ Asparagus: Although you may eat them with your fingers if the stalk is still firm, most people prefer to use a knife and fork.



## Accidents and other Awkward Stuff

No matter how hard you try, sometimes accidents happen. When they do, it takes good manners to handle them quickly and quietly with as little fuss as possible.

- ❖ If you take a bite and get a piece of gristle, spoiled food, or shell, simply push it to the front of your mouth with your tongue and deposit it back on your fork or spoon. Put it on the edge of your plate. Don't exaggerate it or make comments about it.
- ❖ Never pick your teeth at the table. If you have to remove something, excuse yourself and leave the table for a minute to resolve the problem.
- ❖ Never comb or touch your hair at the table.
- ❖ If you take a bite of something that burns your mouth, take a sip of water or milk. If you start to choke on something try the water again. You can also cover your mouth with a napkin and try to cough or swallow. If you really have an emergency, grab the person next to you and point to your throat.
- ❖ If you have a little spill, scoop it up, put it back on your plate, and dab at the stain with water and your napkin.
- ❖ If you have a big spill, tell the hostess immediately and offer to help clean it up.
- ❖ When you drop a knife or fork at home please pick it up, put it aside and ask for, or go get, a replacement. In a restaurant leave the dropped utensil on the floor and ask the waiter for another.

## Restaurant Rules

As you get older (much older, like 18 hopefully) you will visit restaurants with friends and dates. The basic rules of dining that you have just read still apply. However there are some special considerations when having a meal at a restaurant when you are "much older".

- ❖ If you are with a group of six or more, one of you should assume the responsibility as host. This will make it less confusing than if everyone tries to talk to the waiter or maitre de at once. This does not mean that this person has to pay the bill; it just gives the waiter some direction.
- ❖ If there is not a waiter to seat the ladies, the gentlemen should seat them (just pull out the chair and wait for them to sit and then give it a little push in).
- ❖ If a guy takes a girl out to dinner and is paying for it, the girl needs to show some consideration for her date's wallet. She should never order the most expensive item on the menu. She shouldn't order the least expensive item either because it implies that her date cannot afford the food. The best thing to do is order something that is in the middle price range.
- ❖ If you need to summon your waiter, the best way is to catch her eye and raise your hand with your index finger pointing up. If he or she refuses to look in your direction you may call out "waiter or waitress" quietly. If the waiter or waitress is too far away, ask another waiter to tell your waiter that you need service.
- ❖ Many times if you are dining with friends you will go "Dutch Treat." This means each person will pay for him/herself. When there are only two or three couples you can ask for separate checks, but when there are more, it becomes very difficult and confusing for the waiter to provide separate checks.

- ❖ If you have a large group, the spokesperson (host) for the group can ask for the check. The easiest way to pay it is to divide the bill according to the number of people dining and collect the same amount of money (including tip) from each diner. However if there is a big difference in the cost of what members of your group ordered (one had a lobster and another only had a salad) the bill should be divided up by the cost incurred by each diner. Please try to do the divvying up as quietly and easily as possible.
- ❖ Some restaurants offer buffet lunches and dinners. When you eat at a buffet you are expected to eat all you take and leave used plates and silverware on the table when you go back for seconds. The waiter should remove and replace the plates while you are helping yourself to the next selection.
- ❖ An average and reasonable tip is 15 to 20 percent of the bill. If your waiter has been fantastic then you can leave more. If he or she has been terrible then you may leave less.
- ❖ At the end of the meal a woman can quickly put on a touch of lipstick (preferable with a small mirror). However no one at the table (male or female) is ever allowed to comb their hair or use a toothpick. Go to the restroom to take care of that.

# Introductions

## The First Impressions

When you see someone for the first time, perhaps a new kid on the playground, do you think about whether or not you might like him or her before you even talk to this new kid?

Maybe you look at what the child is doing or what he or she is wearing? Maybe you look to see if the child is smiling or frowning at you? Do you think you could decide if you like this new child just from looking at him or her? We really can't know exactly what people are like before we talk to them and get to know them, but **MANY**, many people do use "non-verbal" information (how someone looks, what they are wearing, their facial expressions and body language) to form an impression of others!

For example, if your mom asks you to meet her friend what do you think this person will think about you if you hide behind your mom, look at the ground, shuffle your feet and frown? Instead, what if you were to stand by yourself, look at this person in the eyes and smile? Wow! Your mom's friend would have an impression of you that you are self-confident by the way you were standing up and not fidgeting or hanging on your mom, that you are comfortable talking to others because you looked her in the eyes, and that you are a happy nice person by the way you were smiling. All that, before you even opened your mouth to say a word!

It's important to make a great first impression because, unfortunately, once a person has formed a bad or negative impression of you, it is hard for them to admit they were "wrong" and change their mind. If you can remember to stand up straight, make eye contact with people when you are meeting and speaking with them, and to also smile, you will be successful at making a great first impression!

## Eye Contact

Some children, and frankly even some adults, feel shy when meeting new people and have a hard time looking them in the eye (both eyes of course). So, here is a trick if you do feel uncomfortable ... think about trying to see what color eyes the person has! This gives you something simple to focus on at an awkward shy moment, and the results will be that you will be looking at the person in the eyes! You can also have fun keeping tabs on how many people have blue eyes versus brown, wear glasses or not, have bushy eyebrows, and so on.

Just make sure that when you meet someone you look them directly in the eyes and not down at their feet. While you do want to maintain eye contact during the conversation, you should certainly look away at times to avoid the person feeling like you are staring at them.

## Body Language

Again, body language is:

- ❖ How you carry yourself (straight, slouched over, head up/down, hands clenched or relaxed, etc.).
- ❖ Eyes (looking into others' eyes, at your hands, people's feet, etc.).
- ❖ Facial expressions (frowning, smiling, angry/happy look, etc.).
- ❖ Attire (your clothes, shoes, hair, make-up, jewelry, etc.).  
Although what you wear is not a part of your body really, it does send a message about you! For example, if you went to meet the principal of your new school for the first time and you showed up in jeans with holes in the knees and an old sweatshirt, what do you think the principal would think of you? He might think that you are a sloppy person, that you do not care about what other's think of you, and that you do not have any respect for the school or him!

When you get older and start interviewing for schools and even jobs, you will really want to pay special attention to how you look. If you make an effort to look right for your interview (clean, pressed "nice" clothes, clean shoes, combed hair, subtle make-up and jewelry for women, etc.), the interviewer or prospective employer will form an impression of you that you (1) pay attention to details, (2) are concerned about what others think, and (3) that you have respect for the school/job and the person you are meeting with.

**Remember ... If you dress appropriately for the situation, and take pride in your appearance, you will make a great impression!**



## Shaking Hands

Shaking hands is a must for most proper introductions, interviews and business meetings when you are older. Here are a few basic rules for the handshake:

- ❖ Use your right hand and make your handshake strong and warm.
- ❖ You should stand and shake hands with others when introduced.
- ❖ Continue to shake hands while you are giving your name and saying, "It's nice to meet you."

## Introducing Yourself

If you want to make an impact and create a great first impression when meeting others, just follow these easy steps:

1. Stand (if sitting).
2. Keep your head up (not unnaturally high however) and smile.
3. Extend your arm to shake hands and give a firm and warm handshake.
4. Say, "Hello/hi, my name is (insert your name). It is nice to meet you."
5. If the person does not offer his/her own name you may ask "what is your name?"
6. Use the other person's name once they've told you so that you can remember it easier. Also, people like to hear their own name!

**Remember ... follow these 6 easy steps every time to make a great first impression!**

## Introducing Others

Believe it or not, there is a right and wrong way to introduce people. Here are some simple rules to remember:

- ❖ Say the name of a more prominent person before someone less prominent. "Reverend Bob Russell, this is my Aunt Trish Poe."
- ❖ Say an older person's name before a younger person. "Greg Norman, this is Tiger Woods."
- ❖ Say an adult's name before a child's name. "Mr. Freeland this is Jackson Mocher."

- ❖ When introducing a friend to your parents, say your mother and/or father's name first. Make sure to give your friend's first and last name as well as your parent's last name in case your friend doesn't know it or if it is different than yours. "Mom this is Susan Fowler. Susan, this is my mother Mrs. Huff".
- ❖ If a boy and girl or a man and woman are about the same age, always say the woman's name before than man's. "Cindy Husk, this is Jim Hartman".
- ❖ When you are introducing one person to a group, say the name of the person you are introducing first. "Jenn Griffin, I'd like you to meet George Barnes, Emma Marti and Luke Barncastle."

To make it simple, here is the priority:

1. A prominent person - e.g., The President
2. An older person - e.g., your grandfather
3. A woman / girl - e.g., your sister

**Remember ... Say the priority person's name first and then the other person's name! Also, use full names and titles whenever possible.**



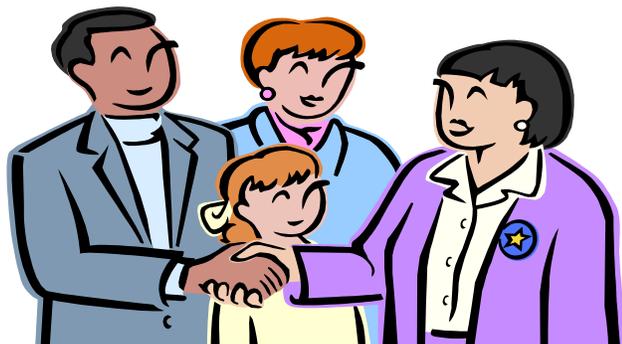
## The Art of Polite Conversation

Sometimes you may feel shy or bored by adults and other people you don't know well, or at all. Most people, even grownups, sometime have trouble when it comes to chatting with people they don't know well.

But there is no getting around the fact that you are going to need to know how to talk to people who make you slightly uncomfortable: teachers, bosses and even parents and some of your peers. Follow these guidelines and you'll be able to handle most conversations easily. You might even start to enjoy it, and (heaven forbid) become the life of the party!

- ❖ Your parents are proud of you. They want their friends to see what a great job they have done raising you. Take a few minutes to chat with their friends when they come to your home. If they are there for an adult party, try at least to say hello and chat with them for a minute or two. If your parents wish, you might even take their coats.
- ❖ If visitors are there for a family visit, try to sit and chat with each guest one on one for at least five or ten minutes.

**Remember ... always look people in the eyes and speak clearly. Don't look around or down at your shoes. Make the person you are talking to feel like the most important person in the world during your conversation.**



## What to Talk About

Sometimes it's hard to know what a person wants to talk about. Really, they are interested in just about anything you want to share.

Some topics should not be discussed. It is not good to talk to people about money, family arguments or other personal problems. The old saying about never discussing religion or politics has some truth as well. Don't talk about gross things with guests either, for example a recent bout of the stomach flu or a particularly nasty cold.

When you don't know what to talk about, with other kids or adults, here are some topics that you can safely use:

- ❖ The weather (absolutely the safest topic).
- ❖ School.
- ❖ Plans for the day, weekend, holiday, summer.
- ❖ Something nice about the other person (e.g., you like something they are wearing or you like their new haircut).
- ❖ Sports.

Everyone loves to talk about themselves. Throw the conversation ball to the other person with a question about them. You may not have to say another word for the rest of the conversation!

**Remember ... to make polite conversation ask the other person about them self. It is more polite to ask questions than it is to ramble on about yourself!**