



Steps to Dining Etiquette

Step 1 – Where do I begin?

- **Napkins** go in your lap when the food arrives. If you are the host, others will wait until you place your napkin in your lap; if you're the guest, wait until your host places napkin in lap. Large dinner napkins are left folded in half; smaller napkins are opened completely. You may use them to wipe your mouth or your hands, but not to blow your nose.
- Which plates or utensils are part of **my place setting**? Remember the BMW rule: Bread (left), Main Course (center), Water (right). Source: "The Etiquette Center"
- **Which utensil** do I use first? The general rule is to start from the outside and work toward the center using the most appropriate utensil.

Step 2 – General Dos

- **Follow your host.**
- Try a bit or two of new foods and everything served to you unless you are allergic to it or adhering to restricted diet. You may find you like it. If offered more, you may reply that you do not care for any more.
- Chew with your mouth closed.
- "Please pass the _____" rather than reaching.
- Remember posture, sit up straight and keep elbows off the table.
- Cover your mouth with a napkin or your hand to sneeze or cough.
- Talk about pleasant things during a meal.
- Discretely remove bones, pits or other foreign objects with the utensil you were eating with, or fingers if that is the most discrete. Place the item to the side of your plate.
- Excuse yourself without explanation to take care of grooming, etc. Place your napkin on your chair.

Step 3 – General DON'Ts

- **Talk with food in your mouth.**
- No smacking lips when chewing or slurping soup or other liquids.
- Put liquid in your mouth when food is already there.
- Gesture or point with a utensil.
- **Cut up the entire meal before starting to eat.**
- Stir foods (potatoes and gravy).
- Play with your food.
- Don't complete any grooming at the table (pick teeth, put on lipstick, etc.)
- Correct someone else's manners in front of others. Not even your own children.

Step 4 – Appetizer, similar rules to eating main course.

- **In general, food on plates is eaten with a fork; food in bowls is eaten with a spoon.**
- Eat shrimp cocktail with seafood fork or fruit cocktail with a spoon.

Step 5 – Soup, drink or sip from the side of spoon

- It is NOT acceptable to blow on your soup to cool it. You may gently stir it or hold a spoon full out of the bowl while it cools.
- Spoon soup away from you toward the center of the bowl and **sip from the side of the spoon.**
- Do not put crackers in soup at a very formal meal. Less formal, put a few crackers, unbroken or croutons in at a time.
- Place the spoon on the underlying plate when not eating and when finished.
- Different sources say you may or may not get the last tasty bit by tipping the bowl away from you slightly.

Step 6 – Bread or Salad, one bite at time

- Put bread and butter on the bread plate; break off small piece of bread, put a small amount of butter on that bite. Butter knife is placed on plate or if dinner knife and small plate, put tip on the plate.
- Use a fork and knife to cut up salad a bite or two at a time. **Do not use the side of the fork to cut food.**

Step 7 – Main Course

- Both American and European ways of holding fork and knife and cutting are acceptable.
- When not eating, place knife and fork in the inverted “V” position.
- When eating, but not using your knife, place it across the top of our plate.

Step 8 – Now that the meal’s over

- **Place your knife and fork in the 4 o’clock position;** the fork to the left with tines up and knife blade toward the fork to signal you’re finished.
- **Place your napkin to the side of your plate,** not refolded and not “wadded up”
- Say thank you to the person who prepared the meal and/or your host.

Step 9 – Other Helpful Hints

- **Slow down.** Our world is so fast paced, that we often eat too fast. Take one bite at a time.
- **Practice** good table manners often. Only when they become second nature will you be really comfortable with them.
- If you are **being toasted**, you sit and do not raise your glass. You don’t toast yourself.

Sources:

Post, Peggy, *Emily Post’s Etiquette, 17th Edition*, 2004
Johnson, Dorothea, *The Little Book of Etiquette*, 1997.

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