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**DINING AND BUSINESS
E T I Q U E T T E**



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Dining and Business Etiquette

Etiquette is defined as “the forms, manners, and ceremonies established by convention as acceptable or required in social relations, in a profession, or in official life.” Times change and this affects the guidelines of etiquette. Common sense will typically be your best guide, but it is helpful to have some general ideas regarding dining and business etiquette.

This handout will provide some basic information for your day-to-day experiences. There are many things to keep in mind when dining, but as always common sense should be your guide. When dining with a prospective employer remember it may look like lunch/dinner but its still business. The way you act during a meal will have impact on an interviewer’s hiring decision and your future.

GREETING

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-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.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introducing people is one of the most important acts in business life, yet few people know how to do it. Introduce a younger person to an older person; introduce a non-official person to an official person; and in business introduce the junior to the senior. 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.

NAMETAGS

In many situations you will be wearing a nametag to identify yourself and your affiliation. Nametags serve an important purpose and should be worn on the right hand side of your front shoulder area. Do not clip nametags to the bottom edge of your jacket. Wearing the nametag on the right hand side of your shoulder immediately enables a person to see your name, particularly as you are shaking hands. If the nametag is one worn on a cord around the neck, be sure to adjust the length so it can be easily seen without the other person having to look down. If writing your own nametag, write in large clear letters that can be easily read by others.

RECEPTION/SOCIAL HOUR

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: is everyone standing or are there cocktail rounds or tables for seating? Seeing the room layout gives you a clue on how to proceed at the reception.

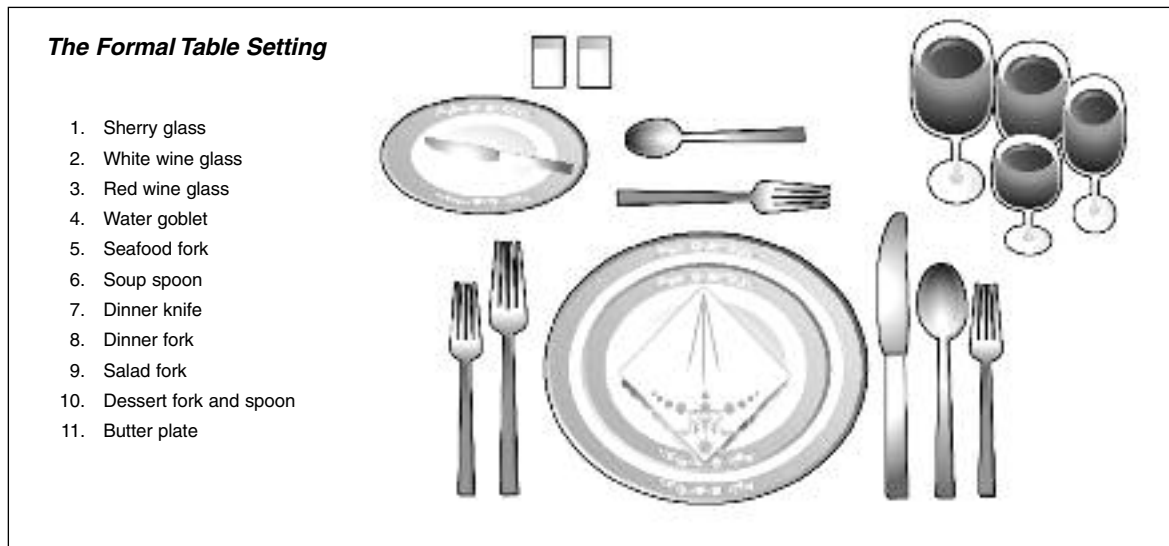
If no tables are available, you should only have a drink or your food in your hand—never both. You should be prepared to greet and shake hands with individuals. If having a drink hold it in your left hand to keep your right hand dry and ready to shake hands. If eating hold your plate on the right hand 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 attending a business function even if the event is described as a social time. 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 of the attendees as is possible. Do not interrupt people but wait until they include you or there is a break in the conversation and you can introduce yourself. To start conversations ask the person something about themselves or their job. You will find most people enjoy talking about themselves and this is a good way to begin a conversation. Do not be looking around the room for your next contact as you carry on a conversation with someone. Focus eye contact on that individual and after a time politely excuse yourself to move on to someone else.

DINING ETIQUETTE

It is important to know how to conduct oneself properly at the table. The rules of dining etiquette are fairly straightforward and mostly require common sense.

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.



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.

Served. 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.

Soup. 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. Do not slurp or make noises when eating soup.

Sorbet. This item is often served between courses to cleanse the palate. It is a light, sherbet texture and depending on when served may be eaten with a fork or a spoon.

Utensils. Be careful how you hold your utensils. Many people tend to make a fist around the handle of the utensil— this is the way a young child would grasp a utensil (not an adult). There are two acceptable ways to use the knife and fork: continental fashion and American standard. Continental fashion— the diner cuts the food usually one bite at a time and uses the fork in the left hand, tines pointing down, to spear the food and bring it to the mouth. American standard— a few bites are cut, the knife is laid across the top of the plate, sharp edge toward you, and the fork is switched to the right hand, if right-handed, tines up to bring the food to the mouth. (Do not cut more than two or three bites at a time.)

Dessert Utensils. 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 (fork to the left and spoon to the right).

Passing. Pass “community food” such as the breadbasket, salt and pepper, and salad dressing to the right. Always pass the salt and pepper together. When passing items such as a creamer, syrup pitcher or gravy boat, pass it with the handle pointing toward the recipient.

Seasoning. Always taste your food first before using any seasonings. Do not assume it needs to be seasoned.

Sweeteners. 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.

Bread. Bread/rolls should never be eaten whole. Break into smaller, more manageable pieces, buttering only a few bites at a time. Toast and garlic bread however may be eaten as whole pieces since they are usually already buttered. If you are served a piping hot muffin or biscuit, you may break in half crosswise, butter and put back together. However when ready to actually eat, break it into small pieces.

Glasses. 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. Coffee cups may be located to the right of the knife and spoon.

Alcohol. 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. In fact slowly sipping is recommended. If you do not want an alcoholic drink politely decline.

Buffets. Buffets provide an opportunity to select items you enjoy. Do not overload your plate. Select a balanced variety of food items.

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 some options (ex. Allergic to shellfish—ask if they have cod or flounder and be ready with your preference). This lets the server know what you can eat. Always eat a little of all items served to you.

Ordering from Menu. As the guest select an item that is in the mid-price range, easy to eat and you will enjoy. Consider asking your host/hostess for a recommendation before making your decision. As the host it is helpful to take the lead in ordering appetizers and wine, if these are to be served.

Finished. 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.

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’, etc. are your allies. They can assist you with whatever problem may arise. Quietly get their attention and speak to them about the issue.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

A good point to remember in business etiquette is everyone should be treated with equal courtesy and respect. Times have changed and some of the old standards no longer apply. 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 help each other when help is needed and have consideration for others. Good manners and business etiquette have always been based on common sense and thoughtfulness.

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.

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.

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.

COMMUNICATION

Telephone. Telephone manners are very important. Have a definite purpose for calling someone because telephone calls are an intrusion into their busy day. Identify yourself and speak clearly into the phone—never chew gum, eat, drink or smoke while using the telephone.

Voicemail/Answering Machine. If you encounter someone's voicemail, state your name, organization, and reason for calling and slowly give your telephone number. Many people will leave a very good, clear message and then quickly rattle off their phone number. Voicemail is most efficient if you leave a concise but detailed message. Many times the person receiving the call will be able to get the information you need and leave that in their return call or message to you. Use voice mail wisely and efficiently. Always have a concise, professional greeting on your answering machine/voicemail.

Email. Email has become an important part of our communication and should be used in a professional manner. It can be a quick and effective means of communication. Always put identifying information in the subject line to help the individual receiving the message know what it is in reference to. The text box of the email message should begin with a salutation such as Dear Ms. Smith or Hello John depending on the relationship. After the salutation drop down to the next line to begin the message. Use complete sentences and appropriate capitalization and punctuation as you would use in a business letter. If needed you may have multiple paragraphs. The casual email correspondence you have with your friends is not appropriate for business. Do not use all caps in the message nor the symbols for happy faces, etc. Even if you have automatic signature on your email, you should still close the message (Ex. Thank you, Ann Smith). Remember to read your message through after you have written it and to run spell check before you click on the send button.

CULTURAL COURTESY

Cultural courtesy is becoming very important as more business is being conducted in and with foreign countries. Show appreciation and respect for the differences between our country and someone else's. You should always be aware of these cultural differences in etiquette. Be sensitive to their rules of etiquette. If you are traveling overseas representing an American firm be very aware of the customs and culture of the country you are visiting. This can be very important to your business dealings. Research the customs and culture of the country with which you will have business transactions.

FIVE KEY WORDS

Remember five words that are too often neglected in business: Please, Thank You, and Well Done. Social skills can help us build more productive relationships. In these changing times, one needs to prepare for a variety of encounters in both the business and social environments.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Letitia Baldrige's Complete Guide to Executive Manners, Rawson Associates, New York

Amy Vanderbilt's Etiquette, Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York

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