

## Etiquette Tips — Dining, Dressing, & Interviewing

Since first impressions greatly influence a hiring decision, the manner in which perspective employees present themselves can make a critical difference. Two really important aspects of business etiquette are professional dress and dining. Dressing right and eating with good manners are essential to the job interviewing process. Here are some tips to help you navigate your way through the sometimes confusing rules of etiquette.

### Dressing for Your First Impression

- To most employers, first impressions still count and poor personal appearance at an interview is a major factor leading to the rejection of applicants
- Dress to project the image you want the employer to receive and let your clothing reflect your knowledge of the type of job for which you are applying
- Even if the company has a “business casual” dress policy, it is better to take a conservative approach when interviewing
- Knowing that your appearance is good may give you added confidence, and self-confidence is essential if you are going to make a positive impression

### Once the Job Is Yours

- Don’t forget about your grooming and appearance once you have been hired
- Despite the trend toward more freedom of expression in the way employees dress, many employers have maintained strict dress codes
- As soon as you’ve been hired, find out whether your employer has a dress code
- Some codes are written down, but others are “just understood”
- Your dress and grooming may affect the initial friendships you form on the new job because dress extremes may attract some people, but turn others off
- While it appears that dress and grooming rarely are the major factors involved when workers are fired, many employers cite that both had at least some impact on firing decisions

### Dressing for the Interview

#### *Tips for Men*

- **Suit for a business professional conservative environment** - dark solid or slight pinstripe conservative
- **Blazer** for an informal business casual environment – coordinated sport coat or blazer with khakis, chinos, or gabardine trousers
- **Shirts** – long-sleeved dress shirt in solid colors such as white, cream, or light blue are preferred
- **Necktie** – medium width silk ties in solids, stripes, and small patterns. Tip of the tie should touch the top of the belt
- **Shoes & Socks** – dressy slip-ons and lace-up shoes in black, burgundy, or dark brown. Dark color or neutral over-the-calf socks coordinated to trousers
- **Belts & Accessories** – leather belts in black, burgundy, or dark brown to match trousers or shoes. Avoid flashy cufflinks, rings, or neck chains. If wearing an earring (or several), remove it (them) before the interview. Trim-styled watch with leather or good-quality metal band. Wedding bands and conservative rings are appropriate, but limit one per hand
- **Hair, Skin & Fragrance** – hair should be clean and neatly combed. No “five-o’clock shadow”; facial hair should be groomed and trimmed. Go light on after shave products and avoid colognes. Cover tattoos

### ***Tips for Women***

- **Matched-skirted suit** for a conservative business professional environment – conservative suit in neutral colors or understated plaids. Skirt length no shorter than slightly above the knee, no longer than just below mid-calf
- **Unmatched suit for an informal business casual environment** – jacket and pants or skirt in coordinating colors and fabrics. Skirt no shorter than an inch above the knee, no longer than just below mid-calf
- **Blouses** – Solid colors or small, subtle geometric patterns and florals. Avoid sheer fabrics, oversized prints, frills, ruffles, straps, or plunging necklines
- **Shoes** – Medium to low heeled pumps, no open toes or slings, opt for shoes in black, navy, taupe, or dark brown leather. Shoe color should match or be darker than hemline. Neutral-colored stockings to match or compliment skin tone
- **Belts & Accessories** – Belts in neutral colors no more than an inch wide. Limit jewelry to small pieces in gold or silver; pearls are also appropriate. No dangling earrings and only one pair per ear. Good quality rings limited to one ring per hand
- **Watch**- Plain round face or tank-styled watch with leather or clasp-style metal band
- **Hair, Makeup, & Fragrance** – Hair should be natural color, or at least look that way. Wear longer hair pulled up or back and away from your face. Go light on makeup and avoid perfume. Cover tattoos

## **Dining Etiquette**

You might be surprised at how many times you may be put in a situation where you will need to display these skills! Although most people realize the importance of proper table manners, mastering them is a real art. Knowing the proper table mannerisms can be extremely important for job interviews and social occasions that you attend with a supervisor, client, or business associate. By being knowledgeable and practiced, you will be able to avoid embarrassment and the possibility of offending someone.

### ***Being Seated***

Men precede women to the table. Remain standing until the host or hostess has been seated. On social occasions, it is still considered polite behavior for a gentleman to seat his female guest or companion. When being seated, enter your chair from the left and rise from the right.

### ***Napkins***

Napkin is unfolded immediately or after everyone is seated and placed on one's lap. Large napkins are folded in half with the crease toward you. Small napkins are completely unfolded. If you must leave the table during the meal, rest the napkin on your chair. At the end of the meal, place napkin to the left of your place setting, NEVER on your plate.

### ***Reading the Table***

Analyze the place setting to find clues on number of courses and foods to be served. Notice the location of each utensil and remember the first one used is farthest from the serving plate – eating is done from the outside in!

### ***Where to Put Your "Stuff"***

- Cell phone and/or ipod need not be taken to the interview, leave them at home or in the car
- Place padfolio, briefcase, clutch wallet or purse to the right of or the right side underneath your chair
- Exit from your chair from the right and enter from the right
- Jackets should be checked (if coat check is available) or hung on available coat racks/hooks

### ***Table Settings***

**Dinner Plate:** Largest plate  
**Salad Plate:** Medium  
**Bread Plate:** Small  
**Goblet/Wine:** Right side above dinner plate  
**Utensils:**

- **Dinner Knife:** Largest knife, right side closest to plate
- **Bread Knife:** Small, across bread plate
- **Dinner Fork:** Largest fork, left side closest to plate
- **Salad Fork:** Small, outer left side
- **Teaspoon:** Small spoon, next to knife on right side
- **Soup Spoon:** Large, next to teaspoon on outer right side

### ***Beverages - The Proper Method***

- Grasp glasses by the stem, using the thumb and first two fingers
- Traditionally speaking, red wine is served with red meat, white wine with white meats
- Wine Service - The host/hostess is served wine first to gain approval for the table. Other guests' wine will be served after the host/hostess has completed the tasting
- Coffee is considered an after dinner drink unless ordered with the meal

### ***To Start the Meal***

- Generally speaking, there will be a host or hostess at the table, other guests should remain standing until the host/hostess has been seated
- When being seated by a man (woman), enter the seat from the left, and rise from the right after dinner
- Spread your napkin on your lap when you are seated. Large dinner napkins should be half-folded, small napkins should be opened full-size. At the end of the meal, leave the napkin semi-folded to the left of your plate
- Your elbows should be kept in and not rested on the edge of the table
- Read the place setting. In a proper place setting, you will use the silverware farthest from your plate first. Your place setting can tell you what is about to be served. If you are unfamiliar with the people seated at your table, take the time to introduce yourself to the other guests
- Do wait until all of the guests at your table have been served before beginning to eat
- Do not automatically salt and pepper your food. Take a small taste and then season if necessary
- If you are with a host/hostess who orders wine, it is proper for the host/hostess to sample a small amount of wine, and either approve or disapprove of the wine. If approved, the waiter/waitress will then pour wine for the remainder of guests at the table
- Follow your host or hostess' lead when dining, this is very important. Wait until the host or hostess orders. The host or hostess will "set the stage" for your dining experience

### ***Food-Specific Tips***

- Chicken is eaten with a fork and knife
- Clams/oysters in the half shell hold the shell with the left hand and lift the clam out using your oyster fork
- Crab/shrimp/lobster cocktails are eaten with a cocktail fork
- Fried Fantail Shrimp are picked up by the tail and eaten with the fingers
- Crab/lobster claws are cracked with a nutcracker, broken with the fingers and the meat taken out with an oyster fork

# The Meal

## ***First Course - Soup***

- Not all soup is served hot
- Do not blow on hot soup to cool it
- Do not crunch crackers in your soup
- When using your soup spoon, enter the bowl or cup from the front, move to the back of the dish, then lift up
- When finished, place the spoon on the right side of the soup bowl/cup on the service dish

## ***Second Course - Salad***

- In Europe, salad may be third course
- Use the correct fork
- Use your knife if necessary, and when finished, place the used knife on the spoon if no liner plate exists
- Again, lay used utensils on the side of the plate

## ***Third Course - Palate Cleanser***

- In Europe, entree may be the second course
- If passing a food item, such as the bread and butter, pass to the right
- Do not wipe your silverware if it is dirty. Instead, ask for new silverware
- Do not reach in front of a person. Do not bow down over your food

## ***Fourth Course - Entree, Potato or Pasta, and Vegetables***

- When cutting food, never cut more than 2-3 small pieces at a time
- Quietly wipe up small spills. Ask for help from the wait staff for large spills. If silverware is dropped, ask the wait staff for new silverware

## ***Fifth Course - Dessert***

- Only two pieces of silverware should be left. The dessert fork, if needed, will be closest to the plate on the left hand side, or will be above the place setting
- Coffee cups are usually turned upside down. Turn your coffee cup up to alert the wait staff that you want coffee

# Dos and Don'ts

## ***Dos:***

- Sit up fairly straight
- Keep your elbows in
- Spread your napkin on your lap when you are seated
- Large dinner napkins are half-folded, small napkins opened full-size
- At the end of the meal, leave the napkin semi-folded at the left side of the place
- Wait until all are served before beginning to eat
- Use the silverware farthest from your plate first
- Pass to the right
- Only cut one or two small pieces of meat at a time
- Eat in small bites and slowly
- Place used silver on the dish to which it belongs
- Replace your chair after the meal
- Leave your napkin on the back of your chair if you leave the table

### ***Don't:***

- Place elbows on table while eating
- Wipe off your silverware before eating
- Reach in front of a person
- Help yourself from a dish first
- Bow down over the plate as you eat
- Blow on food to cool it
- Put your purse on the table
- Drink with food in your mouth
- Push your chair back after the meal and sit sideways or with legs crossed
- Smoke
- Dunk your food
- Stack your dishes
- Crunch crackers in your soup

### ***Other Tips***

- The silverware to be used first will be placed on the outside
- Food is served on the left, except for beverages, and empty plates are removed from the right
- If there is a hostess/host, follow her/his lead
- Dry foods not served with a serving piece are finger foods (Celery, carrot sticks, olives, crackers, most hors d'oeuvres)
- Soup is taken with the soup spoon and crackers are eaten with the fingers
- Bread is buttered with a knife, one piece at a time
- Use your knife to cut your salad if necessary
- Remove foreign matter such as fish bone, fruit seed, inedible material with your fingers and place it on the side of the plate as inconspicuously as possible
- Wipe your mouth with the corner of your napkin before drinking
- Large-stemmed glasses are held with the thumb and the first two fingers at the base of the bowl. Small-stemmed glasses are held by the stems
- Ordinary coughing is done behind the hand without excuse. If you have a coughing fit, leave the table
- Blow your nose quietly and without excuse that would draw attention to it
- Spills - small quantities of spilled foods may be picked up immediately and without comment and returned to the plate where they belong. Larger spills - ask for help from wait staff
- To use a finger bowl, dip the tips of the fingers of one hand at a time and dry them on your napkin, which is held in your lap. You may touch your moistened fingers on your lips, but don't moisten the napkin for this purpose
- Coffee cups are held with handle between your thumb and fingers. Do not hook a finger through handle
- When finished eating, lay the knife and fork close together with the fork on the left, tines up, knife on the right with cutting edge facing the fork at 5:20 as if the plate were the face of a clock

## **Tips on Restaurant Tipping**

Maitre d' – to get a good table - \$5 for seating for two

(Prices double for 5-star restaurants)

Waiter/Waitress - 15-20% of bill

Wine Steward - 10% of wine bill

Bartender - 15% of bill

Hat/Coat Check - \$1 per coat

Door Attendant - \$1-2 for cabs

Parking Valet - \$1-2 per use