

Know Which Glass is Yours

As you make changes in your life and grow, you will want to increase your circle of friends. A great way to do that is to take a friend, business associate, or mentor to lunch. You may be invited to a party, Chamber of Commerce or Rotary meeting or other business networking event that includes a meal. Either way you want to make sure you project the professional person that you are. Bad table manners are inexcusable in business and your personal life. They project a person that has not reached a sophisticated level of accomplishment. Someone accomplished would know which glass is his or hers. So be sure to brush up on table etiquette during your “meanwhile” time of getting to where you want to be.

There are a variety of rules on dining etiquette, both American and European Style, which can be learned from books at the library or bookstore. For practical purposes I will stick to the basics here.

When you sit down at a table that is set to serve many, often it is difficult to remember which butter plate and which glass of water is yours. Since most people are right handed, keep it simple by remembering that all glasses and cups on the right are yours. That means, then, that the butter and salad plate as well as the napkin are on the left is your. Solids on the left. Liquids on the right.

Proper posture at the table is very important. Sit up straight, with your arms held near your body. You should neither lean on the back of the chair nor bend forward to place your elbows on the table.

Typically, you want to unfold your napkin and put it on your lap soon after sitting down at the table but if you are a guest, follow your host's lead. When the host unfolds his or her napkin, this is your signal to do the same. The napkin remains on your lap throughout the entire meal. Gently blot your mouth when needed. If you need to leave the table during the meal, place your napkin on your chair as a signal to your server that you will be returning. The host will signal the end of the meal by placing his or her napkin on the table. Once the meal is over, you too should place your napkin neatly on the table to the right of your dinner plate.

If you are at a restaurant, do not order one of the most expensive items on the menu or more than two courses unless your host indicates that it is all right. If the host says, "I'm going to order the dark chocolate cake; please feel free to order dessert," or "The Virginia Spots is the house special; I think you'd enjoy it," then it is all right to order that item if you would like. Do not order a drink during a work day event and do not smoke at the table.

The simple rule for silverware is to work from the outside in. The fork on the outside is your salad fork. Your dessert spoon and fork are above your plate or brought out with dessert. Glasses are on the right and follow the same rule of progression. The wine glass will be on the outside. Red wine glasses will have a larger bowl than white wine glasses. White wine glasses should be held from the stem so as not to warm the chilled wine. Red wine is served at room temperature and the glass may be held by the bowl since the heat from your hand will not affect the taste. The water glass will be farthest to the left.

The soup spoon will be on your far right and should enter the bowl and be scooped away from you. Sip silently and do not put the entire spoon in your mouth. Do not break crackers into your soup. Put the spoon down, break off a piece and eat it. Do the same

with bread. Break off a piece of bread that you will eat, butter it and put the remaining piece down before you eat the buttered piece. Do not bite into bread or a roll. If there is not a butter knife on your butter plate, you may use the dinner knife but place it on your butter plate until the dinner is served – then move it over.

Be sure to cut your food with the fork in your left hand facing down on your plate and the handle tucked under the palm of your hand. Use your pointer finger to control it. The knife will cut from side to side just behind the fork, again with the handle tucked into the palm of your right hand and the fork controlled by your pointer finger. Keep those handles under your palms! Place the knife down at the top of the plate with the sharp edge facing you before you take a bite. As you take a bite, transition the handle of the fork to between your pointer finger and your thumb.

There are more general dining etiquette rules to remember. You will be served from the left and plates will be removed from the right. When you sit down, take your chair from the left and excuse yourself from the right. Pass things to your right. If you are asked to pass the salt, be sure to pass both the salt and pepper together. No purses or other items should be placed on the table. The general rule for removing food from your mouth is that it should go out the same way it went in. Place the piece of food on the edge of your plate. If you used your fingers to put an olive into your mouth that was part of an hors d'oeuvre tray, then you may remove it with your fingers. If you place an inedible piece of gristle into your mouth with your fork, carefully use your fork to remove it. Any utensil that has been used should not touch the table again – it remains on a plate.

When you are finished eating, place your fork, tines down in front of the knife, blade toward you at, the 10:00 and 4:00 o'clock position. This will indicate to the wait staff that you have finished eating and that they can remove your plate.

In conclusion, remember to work from the outside in. Liquids on your right. Solids on your left. And everything goes from left to right.

Rule Break: There are foods that can carefully be eaten with your fingers. These include: artichokes, asparagus without sauce, bacon, bread, hors d'oeuvres, sandwiches, cookies, small fruits or berries with stems, french fries and potato chips, hamburgers and hot dogs, corn on the cob, and pickles.

Eight Rules for Business Dining Etiquette:

1. Take your lead from the host. When he sits down to eat you sit down. When she puts her napkin on her lap, you do the same. If he orders dessert, you may as well, etc.
2. In general, your napkin goes on your lap when you sit down, on your chair when you excuse yourself from the table, and on the table to the right of the plate when you are finished.
3. Solids (bread and butter plate, salad plate and napkin) are on the left. Liquids (glasses and coffee cup) are on the right.
4. Do not order alcohol or smoke at a business lunch.
5. Work from the outside in with utensils. The salad fork is on the outside as the salad is served first.

6. Break and butter only the piece of bread you will put in your mouth. Do not put the entire roll in your mouth.
7. Cut your food with the fork in your left hand and the knife in your right both with the handles under your palms and directing the utensil with your pointer fingers. The knife cuts behind the fork. Put down the knife at the top of the plate, edges toward you, when you take a bite.
8. When you are finished eating put the knife, edges toward you, behind the fork with its tines down at the 10:00 and 4:00 o'clock position on the plate.

Three Simple Rules to Put Good Manners to Use:

1. Take your mentor or a new friend to lunch once a month.
2. Always pay.
3. Send that friend a follow up note on how much you enjoyed the lunch and appreciate their guidance. Include a tip or information that can help them in an area of interest to them.