



DINING ETIQUETTE Q & A



Quick Tips to Remember:

- ❖ Remember the purpose of the meal which is always more important than the function of eating.
- ❖ Follow the lead of your host or hostess.
- ❖ Be discreet.

Q: What is the purpose of a meal with an interview?

A: Employers may want to observe your behavior in a more social situation to see how you conduct yourself, particularly if the position for which you are interviewing requires a certain standard of conduct with clients and executives of the company.

Q: When should you sit down at the table?

A: You should wait for your host/hostess to ask you to sit down before taking your seat. If this does not occur, wait for your host/hostess to be seated and then you can sit.

Q: Which drinks, salad plate, and bread and butter plate are mine?

A: Your beverages are on your right above your spoon. Your salad plate and bread and butter plate are on your left, above your fork.

Q: What do I do with my napkin?

A: After everyone is seated, unfold your napkin and place it across your lap, folded, with the fold toward you. If you need to leave the table, place your napkin on your chair, folded loosely. Only after the meal is over should you place your napkin on the table to the left side of your plate - never on your plate.

Q: When do I begin drinking and eating?

A: If water is on the table, it is appropriate to sip water after everyone is seated and after you have placed your napkin on your lap. For other beverages and food, wait until everyone has been served, and then do not eat until your host/hostess has begun. Do not help yourself to communal foods until your host has indicated that you may do so. If you pick up the bread basket, offer bread to the person on your left, then serve yourself, and then pass the basket to the person on the right (same applies to butter, salad dressings and other condiments that are passed). The host/hostess may request that you begin eating and you should comply with the request.

Q: What should I order to drink?

A: Water, juice or iced teas are safe choices. It is best not to order alcohol even if the interviewer does. It is important to remember that alcohol fuzzes your mind, and research proves that stress increases the intoxicating effect of alcohol. If you do drink, one glass of wine, sipped slowly, may be acceptable - never have more than one.

Q: What is appropriate to order for dinner?

A: It is best to order foods that are easily eaten with a fork and knife such as meats, salads and soups. Avoid spaghetti or other items with red sauce, big sandwiches or greasy handheld items like pizza. Sometimes you may not have a choice and should follow your host's lead.



Dining Etiquette Q & A continued



Q: What do you do if the menu is fixed and you are served something you do not want?

A: Always be polite and appreciative. Never criticize or state a dislike for a food that is served to you. Be gracious and welcome the opportunity to try something different. The position for which you are interviewing might involve dining in other cultures other than your own. You could be evaluated for your grace in such situations.

Q: Is it okay to spread butter on my entire roll at one time?

A: No - butter should be placed on your bread and butter plate, not directly on your bread. It is appropriate to break off a bite-sized piece of your roll, butter it and then eat it.

Q: Is it okay to cut your salad if the lettuce pieces are too large?

A: Yes. Cut a few pieces at a time; do not slice and dice the entire salad at once. It is preferable to cut large salad pieces than to attempt to stuff them into your mouth.

Q: How do I eat and answer questions at the same time?

A: By eating small bites so that you can quickly finish and swallow the bite before speaking. Never speak with food in your mouth. Remember that the main point of the meal is to interact and eating is secondary. Don't eat too quickly and try to stay with the pace of the meal so that you don't hold up the remaining courses.

Q: How do I indicate that I have finished an appetizer or soup?

A: When a service plate is used under the appetizer plate or soup bowl, always rest your utensil on the service plate behind the appetizer plate or soup bowl when finished. If there is not a service plate, rest your utensil on the appetizer plate or in the soup bowl when finished. Your utensil should always rest with the handle to the right. Never place a used utensil on the table.

Q: Do you pass the pepper with the salt, even if someone asks for salt only?

A: Yes, always pass the salt and pepper together. It is considered rude to use the salt and pepper before passing them to the person who asked for them.

Q: Is it rude to season your food before tasting it?

A: It is considered an insult to the chef to do so. Taste your food first and then season if necessary.

Q: What do you do if you find a hair in your food?

A: You can discreetly remove it, eat around it, or politely ask the server to bring you another plate. In any case, do not cause a scene and do not spoil the appetites of others at the table.

Q: What is the appropriate way to excuse yourself from the table?

A: You can excuse yourself from the table by saying, "Excuse me"; you do not need to offer an explanation. If you must leave during the meal, you can indicate whether you are finished eating through proper placement of your utensils. Do not rest utensils or utensil handles on the table.

Finished - ten and four o'clock position (handles at four, knife blade toward you)

Not finished - three o'clock to center position (handles at three)



Dining Etiquette Q & A continued



Q: If a lady gets up during the meal, should all of the men get up too?

A: Yes, men should rise when a lady leaves the table. It is not necessary to completely stand for a temporary departure. Simply rise off the seat to acknowledge her leaving.

Q: Is it ever appropriate to remove your jacket for heat or other reasons?

A: For both men and women, follow the lead of the host/hostess before removing your jacket. If the host/hostess keeps his/her jacket on, keep yours on. If you are hot, it is appropriate to ask the permission of the host/hostess.

Q: Where do you place the knife to rest when you are eating?

A: Place the knife across the top of your plate when you are eating, blade facing toward you.

Q: How do I call the server if I need him/her?

A: You can usually catch his/her eye, but if not, you may ask a nearby server. Avoid getting up from the table to hunt someone down. Again, remember that the meal is not the main purpose for you being there.

Q: What do you do if a piece of food falls off your plate?

A: If the food falls on the floor, leave it and don't step on it. If the food falls on the table and it is a big piece, use your fork and move it to a corner of your plate. Otherwise, let it be.

Q: Is it okay to rest your wrists on the edge of the table in between bites?

A: Yes, it is okay to rest your wrists on the edge of the table but never your elbows.

Q: Should I clean my plate?

A: You do not have to clean your plate. It is polite to leave some food on your plate. Do not push the remaining food around on the plate.

Q: What do I do to signal that I am finished with my meal?

A: Your silverware should be parallel to each other in the ten and four o'clock position, with the handles at 4:00 and tops of the utensils at 10:00. The knife blade points toward you.

Q: What should I do if I feel sick during the dinner?

A: If you really cannot make it through the dinner, excuse yourself and go to the rest room. Return when you are feeling better or have the server explain to your host/hostess that you are not feeling well.

Q: What do I do when the check comes?

A: Typically, you are the guest and so the meal is paid for by the company. Your host/hostess will pick up the check so you won't have to deal with it. Remember to thank your host for the meal at its conclusion.