



CENTER FOR  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## **DINING & BUSINESS ETIQUETTE GUIDE**



“Never do  
anything that  
is unpleasant  
to others.”

–Emily Post

Emily Post offered that statement as the primary rule of etiquette in 1922. Some of her more specific advice may seem peculiar by today's standards—men don't need to remember when and how to lift their hat in greeting, for example—but this principle holds as true as ever.

Courtesy and common sense will always be your best guide, but it is helpful to have some general ideas regarding dining and business etiquette.

This booklet provides 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 that it may look like lunch or dinner but it's still business. The way you act during a meal will have an impact on the hiring decision and your future.

A good handshake is important—it should be firm and held for three to four seconds.



## GREETING

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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 to four seconds. Today in the business world, it is not necessary to wait for a woman to initiate the handshake. Women and men should both be ready to initiate a handshake.

Introduce the junior to the senior. Be sure to explain who people are and use their full names.

## INTRODUCTIONS

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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 person in a nonofficial role to one in an official role, and, in business, introduce the junior to the senior. Be sure to explain who people are and use their full names.

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.

Name tags should be worn on the right-hand side of your front shoulder area so others can see.

John/Jane Doe

## NAME TAGS

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In many situations you will be wearing a name tag to identify yourself and your affiliation. Name tags serve an important purpose and should be worn on the right-hand side of your front shoulder area so others can see your name, particularly as you are shaking hands. Do not clip name tags to the bottom edge of your jacket. If the name tag is on a lanyard around your neck, be sure to adjust the length so the name tag can be easily seen without the other person having to look down. If you are writing out your own name tag, use large clear letters that can be easily read.

## RECEPTION OR SOCIAL HOUR

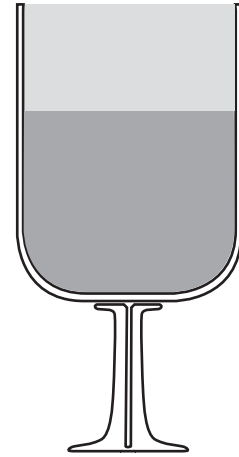
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Receptions and social hours are for the purpose of mingling and making contacts, whether for job leads, as part of an interview, or in entertaining a client.

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.

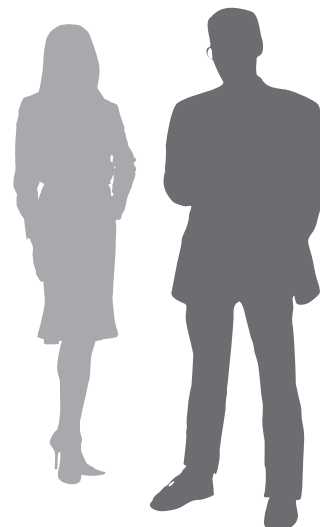
If no tables are available, you should have only a drink or your food in your hand—never both. You should be prepared to greet and shake hands with individuals. If you have a drink, hold it in your left hand to keep your right hand dry and ready to shake hands. If you are eating, hold your plate with your right hand and eat with your left hand. Then when someone approaches, you can switch the plate to your left hand and have your right hand 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 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 or hostess and spend a few minutes conversing on topics that relate to the event or 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 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 people 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 the person you are speaking with, and after a time politely excuse yourself to move on to someone else.



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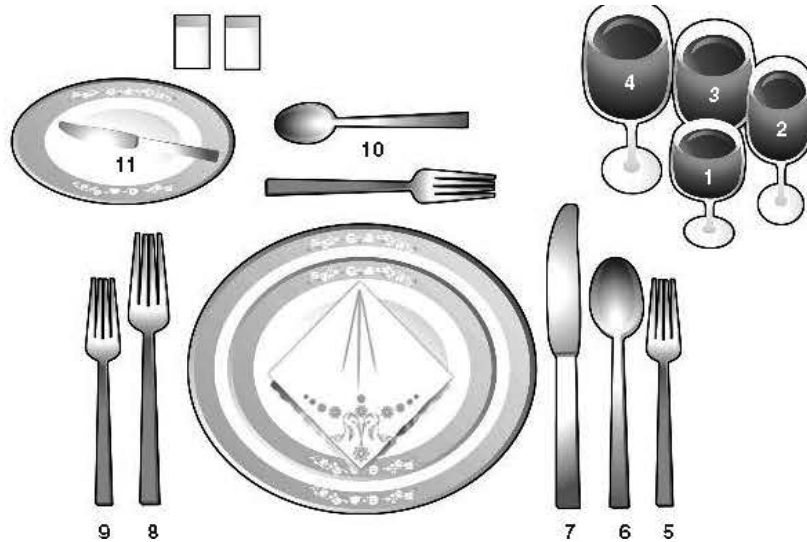


## DINING

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

1. Sherry glass
2. White wine glass
3. Red wine glass
4. Water goblet
5. Seafood fork
6. Soup spoon
7. Dinner knife
8. Dinner fork
9. Salad fork
10. Dessert fork and spoon
11. Butter plate



### TABLE SETTING

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It can be very confusing to be presented with a variety of eating utensils (see above). Remember to start at the outside and work your way in. If you have been given two forks that are the same size, begin with the fork on the outside. Many restaurants use the same size fork for both the salad and main course.

### NAPKIN

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Place your napkin on your lap as soon as you sit down; at a more formal dinner, wait until everyone at your table has been seated to place the napkin on your lap. Do not open your napkin in midair. As you remove your napkin from the table, begin to open it below the table level and place it 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.

### SERVICE

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Wait for everyone at your table to be served before beginning to eat. However, if someone 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

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When eating soup, think of making a circle: spoon away from you, around to your mouth, and back to the bowl. Soup is taken from the side of the soup spoon—the spoon is not inserted into your mouth. Do not slurp or make noises when eating soup.

### SORBET

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

### UTENSILS

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Be careful how you hold your utensils. Many people tend to make a fist around the handle of the utensil—the way a young child would grasp.

There are two acceptable ways to use the knife and fork: continental fashion and American standard. In continental fashion, you cut the food, usually one bite at a time, and use the fork in your left hand, tines pointing down, to spear the food and bring it to your mouth. In American standard you cut a few bites, lay the knife across the top of the plate with the sharp edge toward you, and switch the fork to the right hand (if you are right-handed), tines up, to bring the food to the mouth. Do not cut more than two or three bites at a time.

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## 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.

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## PASSING

Pass community food, such as the bread basket, 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.

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## SEASONING

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

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## 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 the empty packet to the side.

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## BREAD

Bread and rolls should never be eaten whole. Break them into smaller, more manageable pieces, buttering only a bite 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 hot muffin or biscuit, you may break it in half crosswise, butter it, and put it back together. However, when ready to actually eat, break it into small pieces.

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## GLASSES

A variety of types and sizes of glasses can be used throughout the meal. Your drinks will be located in the area above your knife and spoon. A coffee cup may be located to the right of the knife and spoon.

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## ALCOHOL

Alcohol, if consumed, should be in moderation. In most cases you may have a drink during the social hour and wine 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.

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## BUFFETS

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

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## PRE-SET MEALS

With a pre-set meal the host has already made the selections that everyone is served. If allergic, religious, or vegetarian restrictions are an issue, quietly deal with these as the server is at your side. If you are a vegetarian, ask if you may have a vegetable plate; with allergies or religious restrictions, provide the server with some options. (For example, if you are 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.



## **DINING** continued

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### **ORDERING FROM A MENU**

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Select an item that is in the midprice range, easy to eat, and something you will enjoy. Consider asking your host for a recommendation before making your decision. If you are hosting, it is helpful to take the lead in ordering appetizers and wine if these are to be served.

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.

### **DINING AS A GUEST**

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If you are someone's guest at a meal, ask your host what he or 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 midprice range. Keep in mind that the person who initiates the meal will typically pay. Remember to thank your host for the meal.

### **RESTAURANT STAFF**

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Wait staff, servers, the 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**

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A good point to remember in business etiquette is to treat everyone with equal courtesy and respect. Times have changed and some of the old standards no longer apply. Administrative assistants and 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**

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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 to 15 minutes before the interview time.

### **SMOKING**

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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**

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Office parties are good opportunities to improve morale and build goodwill. 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

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## PHONES

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Phone manners are very important. In the business world, have a definite purpose for calling people because phone calls can be an intrusion into their busy day. Identify yourself and speak clearly into the phone. Never chew gum, eat, drink, or smoke while using the phone, as sounds are amplified.

At a function your cell phone should be turned off or silenced. Your phone should not be visible on the table—keep it in a pocket or somewhere off the table. If you must take a call, excuse yourself and then continue the conversation away from the table or group.

## TEXTING

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Never send or check texts in the presence of others at an interview or business function. It is not appropriate to text a message to a potential employer or business contact unless they have specifically asked you to text them. In the business environment, be professional with your text messages. Do not abbreviate words or use emoticons in your professional texts.

## VOICEMAIL MESSAGES

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When leaving a message on 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.

With cell phones, listen to a voicemail before returning a missed call. Many times an individual does not listen to a message before calling and then the person being called has to repeat all of the information, which can be frustrating. From a professional perspective, listening to the message and then calling back with a prepared response shows organization and attention to detail. Use voicemail wisely and efficiently.

Always have a concise, professional greeting. Routinely delete stored voicemail messages. Employers will typically try to make contact with a candidate by phone; if your voicemail is full and cannot accept any messages, that can have a negative impact on an employer trying to connect with you. An employer can assume that if you are not keeping up to date with deleting phone messages, that's how you will also be at work on projects. It is especially important during your job search to have space to receive voice messages and to handle responses in a professional manner.

## EMAIL

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Email is 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. Never leave the subject line blank, as it will often result in the message being sent to the spam or junk file.

The text box of the message should begin with a salutation such as *Dear Ms. Smith* or *Hi John*, depending on the relationship. After the salutation, drop down to the next line to begin the message.

Use complete sentences with appropriate capitalization and punctuation as you would use in a business letter. If they are 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 or emoticons. Even if you have an automatic signature on your email, you should still close the message (for example, *Thank you, Ann Smith*). Remember to read your message through after you have written it and to run spell check before you click *send*. You should respond to emails within 24 hours; even if you do not have the information being requested, at least email to say you are working to obtain it.





## CULTURAL COURTESY

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Cultural courtesy is becoming very important as more business is being conducted in and with other countries. Show appreciation and respect for the differences between your country and someone else's.

You should always be aware of these cultural differences in etiquette and be sensitive to other customs. 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 country's customs and culture ahead of time.

## FIVE KEY WORDS

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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, you need to prepare for a variety of encounters in both the business and social environments.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

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

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

Student Union, Level 2

Monday-Friday

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

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