

Etiquette

Dining Etiquette: Job Interviews Over Lunch or Dinner

by Rick Roberts



Oftentimes, employers will include either lunch or dinner as part of your interview process. They like to see how you handle yourself in a social setting and also if you know your manners and dining etiquette. Many candidates forget that they are still being interviewed over a meal, let their guard down, and reveal things about themselves that might leave a negative impression. It is important to know proper dining etiquette and to stay focused on your interview so that you can present yourself in positive light.

The purpose of this type of interview is to learn more about you as a person and how you will fit in with their staff members. Conversation could cover a lot of topics including politics, sports, movies, and other topics unrelated to the job. Take a conservative approach and avoid controversial remarks. Never let your guard down and keep a professional attitude and demeanor.

Meal interviews are not as easy as they might seem and it is important that you are familiar with proper dining etiquette. This resource guide will help you prepare for the job interview over lunch or dinner.

Pre-Dinner

Be sure to be on time for your meal interview. Arriving early gives you time to freshen up in the restroom, make any needed adjustments to your interview outfit, and take a deep breath before your interview experience. Turn off your cell phone and don't even think about checking it or answering it.

Being Seated

Let your host or hostess guide you in terms of what the seating arrangements are. Wait for your host/hostess to sit before you are seated. Do not place anything on the table such as sunglasses, a brief case, purse, cell phone, etc. Once seated, unfold your napkin and place it on your lap. The napkin should be folded in half with the fold facing toward you. Place your napkin on the left side of the plate when temporarily leaving the table. Place napkin to the right of the plate at the end of the meal. Do not rearrange the table setting. Wait for everyone to arrive and be seated before starting the meal.



Introductions/Greetings

Be sure to greet everyone who is in attendance at the meal interview. Shake hands and say hello to everyone and introduce yourself. If meeting someone after you have been seated, rise from your chair, smile and extend your hand. 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. Men and women should be ready to initiate the handshake.

Posture and Elbows

Sit straight and try not to lean on the table. Keep your elbows off the table and close to your body when you are eating. When you stop to talk, it is okay to rest your elbows on the table and lean forward.

Dining

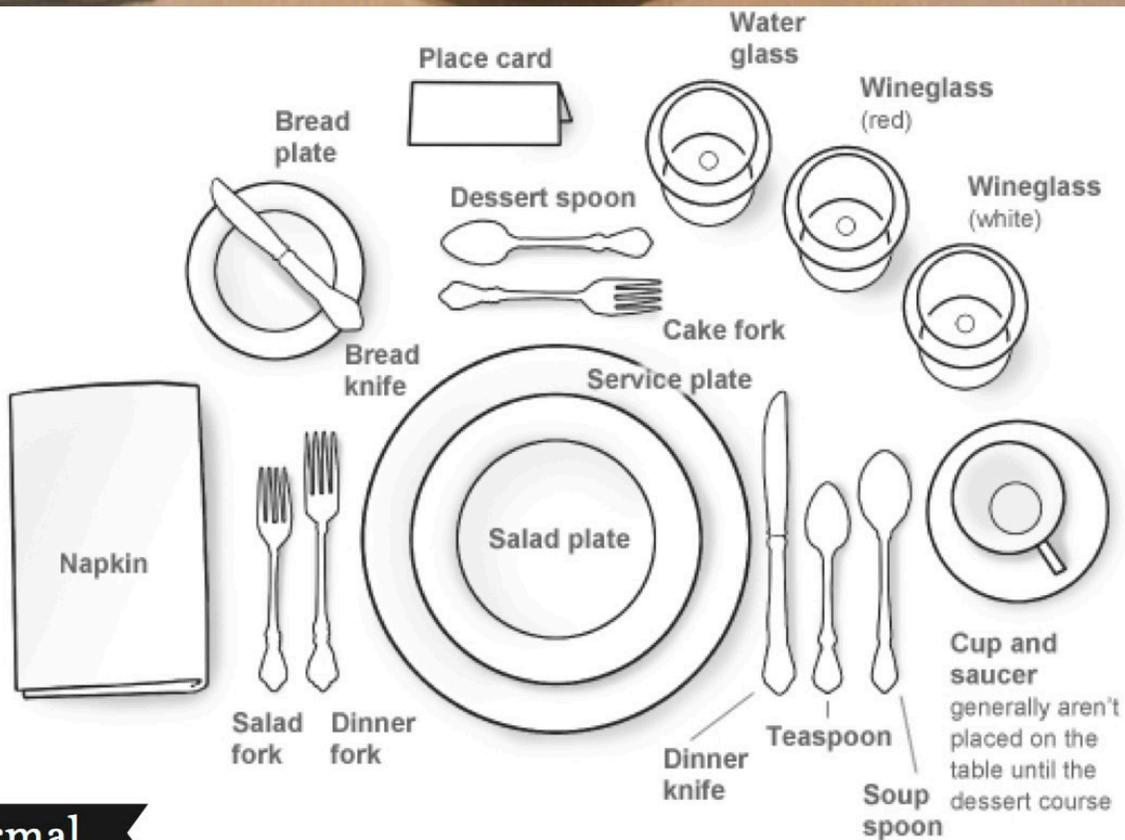
Wait until everyone is seated to begin eating. Everyone should begin and finish at the same time. If you tend to eat fast, try to pace yourself so that you finish at the same time as others. You might make other people feel uncomfortable if you finish first and they feel that you are waiting for them to finish. When you do finish do not push your plate away from you.

Ordering

If you in a private setting the meal might be set and you will not have to make any choices. If you are in a public restaurant follow the lead of your host/hostess when ordering. Your host/hostess will be paying for your meal. Don't order the most expensive item on the menu. It is highly recommended to order something that will be easy to eat. Look for something that is bite sized or can be cut up into small bites. This will make it easier for you to talk during the meal. Remember this is an interview and they will be evaluating you. Don't order food that is difficult or messy to eat. You don't want to be remembered for food dribbling down your chin. Even if the check is placed near you, don't pick it up or try to pay it, your host will take care of the check.

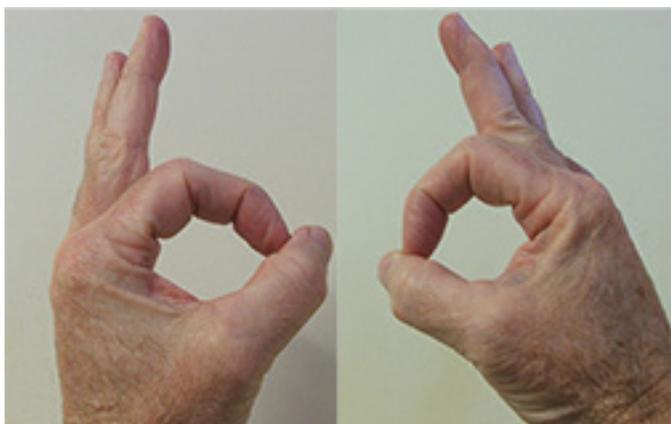


Formal Table Setting



formal

Use The Hand Trick To Understand The Setting



“B” read

“D” rinks

Your bread plate will be on your left along with your napkin. All drinks will be to your right including the water and wine glasses and your coffee cup

Getting Started

Your silverware is set in the order of the various courses that will be served. Pick up your silverware from the outside in going toward your plate. For example, usually the salad is the first course served and the salad fork is on the outside, left of your plate. Note that the dessert fork/spoon are placed above your plate and will be used when the dessert is served. Food will be served on the left and dishes will be removed from the right.

Silverware

American Eating Style: cut your food with the right hand and holding the food with the left, switch hands to eat with your right hand.

Never hold a utensil in a fist. Do not talk and wave your utensils. Set the utensils on our plate not on the table when you are not using them.

Passing Food

Never reach across the table for something. Always ask for it to be passed. Salt and pepper are always passed together even if only one is asked for. Everything gets passed to the right. If you are the first to take the bread basket, offer to your left first, take your piece, then pass to the right.

Eating Tips

Do not talk with food in your mouth. Chew with your mouth closed. Cut your salad if the leaves are too large. Taste your food before seasoning it. If you need to remove food from your mouth, remove it the same way it went in (using fork or spoon). Do not spit it into a napkin. If you don't like something, don't eat it but don't draw attention to it.

Soup

Do not blow on your soup to cool it. Stir it to cool it down. Spoon the soup away from you to eat. When finished with the soup do not leave the spoon in the bowl. Put it on the saucer/platter. Do not slurp the soup.

Rolls

Eat rolls by tearing off bite size pieces. Butter only one piece at a time.

Alcohol

Be very cautious about ordering alcohol. You want to stay alert since this is an interview and you don't want alcohol to dull your senses or cause you to do or say something that could be perceived negatively. It is advisable not to drink alcohol during a meal interview. It is okay to say “no thank you, I prefer _____ (water, soda, ice tea, etc.) with my meal.”



Smoking

Do not smoke at any time during the meal or the interview even if others are smoking. Most restaurants don't permit smoking but if you are in a private setting and room it might be permitted. Even if you are smoker, it is advisable to abstain.

Helpful Tips

Remember this is all part of the job interview process and you are still being evaluated. Let the conversation flow. Don't dominate the conversation. Avoid bragging and being judgemental. Don't ignore people that are at your table. Engage them in conversation by asking them about their interests and things that they enjoy and they are enthusiastic about. Be an active listener. Remember the main focus of the meal is conversation not the food.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Always, always, always, be respectful of all wait staff members.

After The Meal Is Finished

Lay your fork and knife in the finished position. (place your knife and fork in the center of your plate with fork tongs and knife blade to the left in a 9:00 to 3:00 o'clock fashion. Leave your plate where it is and don't push it away. Do not stack dishes. Your used napkin goes next to your plate not on top of it. Do not ask for a doggy or to-go bag. Do not ask for a toothpick.

Thank You

Always say "thank-you" to your host/hostess at the end of the meal and tell them how much you enjoyed yourself. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your host/hostess to thank them for the meal and also to restate your interest in the position.

