About the Author

Kathleen D. Pagana, PhD, RN, is a dynamic speaker and bestselling author. She is an emeritus professor at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and the president of Pagana Keynotes & Presentations. She has been a leader in healthcare for more than 40 years. She has a BSN from the University of Maryland and an MSN and PhD in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania. She has earned the prestigious designation of Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) from the National Speakers Association.

She is the author of more than 95 articles and 29 books. Her business etiquette articles have appeared in more than 15 different national publications. Her most popular books, *Mosby’s Diagnostic and Laboratory Test Reference* (14th ed.) and *Mosby’s Manual of Diagnostic and Laboratory Tests* (6th ed.), have sold almost 2 million copies, with translations in Chinese, French, Greek, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish.

In her positions as patient care manager, military officer, faculty chair, academic dean, and director on the board of a healthcare system, professional etiquette has helped her handle a number of business challenges. She has enjoyed the privilege of helping thousands feel more comfortable in professional and business situations where they are in the spotlight and need to look and act their best.
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Foreword

Have we met? Even if we have, I probably forgot your name almost instantaneously after having heard it. I’m shy and that makes me nervous. I missed your name because I was thinking about what we might have in common to talk about next. If this is a cocktail reception, I have the added stress of knowing that I must talk to many more people yet tonight. I will not remember their names either.

My mother taught me manners. I am a master of saying “Please” and “Thank you.” Why does that provide me with little comfort when it is time to network or when someone asks me to tell them about myself? Perhaps that is why I was so smitten with professional etiquette after I read Kathleen Pagana’s book. This book filled in the gaps in my knowledge that I did not even know existed. Once I was armed with the knowledge of professional etiquette, I began applying what I had learned, and I became more confident. Now if I tell someone that I am shy, they do not believe it! As Thomas Merton said, “We are not converted only once in our lives but many times, and this endless series of conversions and inner revolutions leads to our transformation.”

It was this revelation that motivated me to begin talking to my colleagues about teaching nursing students comportment and etiquette. Some laughed at me. When I led the creation of a professional development co-curriculum for the college of nursing, it was originally dubbed “charm school” and was viewed as antiquated and unnecessary. As nursing faculty, we prepare students to become registered nurses. However, we are not necessarily preparing future nurses for the business of healthcare. Ask any seasoned nurse and they will tell you that healthcare is, indeed, a business.

Students in business majors are prepared with skills related to branding, networking, interviewing, socializing outside the office, and interacting with global partners. This is not part of the standard nursing curriculum in the United States, yet it needs to be if nurses are to advance and successfully navigate the business setting in which the practice of nursing is situated. Nurses enter clinical practice believing they are 100% prepared to advance in their career. They do not even know what they do not know!

Yet, as I watch nursing students who have participated in the professional development program walk with confidence to a potential contact, shake hands, and begin to talk about themselves and what they want in their career, I see the results that knowledge and skill related to professional etiquette yields.
I got to know Kathy when I invited her to present on the topic of dining etiquette. She guided the students through a deliberately challenging three-course meal, sharing insights on etiquette as well as conversation tips. This is now the most popular portion of the professional development curriculum. Students can apply this knowledge to personal and professional settings. Students report how they have used dining etiquette when meeting their romantic partner’s parents over dinner. They are applying these skills during dinners where nursing recruiters try to woo them to their health system. Did I mention that nursing recruiters are actively and aggressively recruiting these students? Kathy and I have discussed that the reason may be that professional etiquette has given these students the polish that sets them apart from the crowd.

You, too, can employ professional etiquette to obtain a position, keep it, or to advance. Kathy’s content is engaging and easy to read. The question and answer format with tip boxes, charts, faux pas, and good idea sections allows you to read quickly but provides a focused and thorough coverage of each topic. It is what you need to know without a lot of fluff. Her approach is fun and informative. Kathy’s guidance on presenting, leading meetings, writing an article, and successfully navigating cultural differences will assist you in developing or refining new skills. You may even develop the confidence to venture into new roles, network with others, or connect through social media outlets.

If you have picked up this book, you either recognize or are starting to recognize the importance of professional etiquette in your nursing career. Whether you have made a serious gaffe that has illustrated the importance of etiquette or simply wish to learn more, reading this book is an important step in your path to both personal and professional future success. Thanks to Kathy’s book, if we meet at a cocktail reception in the future, we will both be a little better at remembering each other’s names, and if we do forget, we will know how to handle it!

–Anne M. Fink, PhD, RN, CNE
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Director of the LEAD Professional Development Program
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Introduction

Although nursing education has been focused on leadership, management, and professional issues, etiquette has been the missing link for success in the workplace. This book describes how to get a job, keep a job, and move ahead in a job. It will prepare you to handle awkward and challenging situations that could diminish your confidence, tarnish your reputation, and derail your career aspirations. After reading this fun and enjoyable book, you will be able to interact more effectively in clinical, business, and social settings. You will be amazed at how often you will think, “I didn’t know how much I needed to know.”

The premise of this book is that everyone can become an expert in etiquette. Further, the better you become at it, the more you will be sought after for opportunities and positions. In these pages, you will find a reality check for those playing (or about to play) the toughest sport of all—survival in a business world that is often unforgiving and highly critical.

Why is etiquette important for nurses? Etiquette is about relationships. Nursing is a career characterized by professional relationships with all kinds of people in all kinds of settings. As more and more healthcare professionals move into top leadership positions, you can be certain that etiquette skills are part of their power base.

By using the guiding principles of kindness, consideration, and common sense, professional etiquette can help you initiate new relationships and enhance established relationships. It can guide you in unfamiliar situations and help you know what to expect from others. For example, this book can help you in the following situations:

- Interviewing successfully for a new job or position
- Introducing yourself and others with confidence
- Demonstrating proper handshake and business card etiquette
- Networking effectively on the job and at conferences
- Knowing how to run a productive meeting
- Learning how to create an online persona
- Dressing to mirror your professional image and responsibilities
- Sending a positive impression with thank-you notes and letters
• Using email, phones, and faxes in a courteous and professional manner
• Using social media to further your career
• Demonstrating leadership skills and advancing your career when giving presentations
• Standing out from the crowd by writing an article
• Dining with confidence in any business or social setting
• Increasing your comfort and self-confidence during business travel
• Appreciating and respecting cultural differences in global interactions

There are no other etiquette books targeted at and customized for nurses. This book contains key business etiquette content with an application to professional nursing. It will help you level the playing field in your interactions with others.

**Key Features**

Each chapter challenges the reader with a series of DO YOU: questions.

**DO YOU:**

• Know what to do when you meet a colleague whose name you have forgotten?
• Know how to introduce your spouse to your boss?
• Have trouble remembering names?
• Have a prepared and practiced elevator pitch?
• Know what to do if a client ignores your attempt to shake hands?
• Wonder when it is appropriate to give out your business card?
A unique feature of this book is its organization in a question-and-answer format. This allows you to target what you need or want to learn or review.

**Is there anything that can be done about sweaty hands?**
Yes. Spray them with an antiperspirant once a day. This usually takes about 24 hours to become effective. If that does not work, see your physician.

**What is a two-handed handshake?**
In this situation, one person’s right hand shakes the other person’s right hand, and the left hand is placed on the other person’s body. The most common left-handed positions are on the wrist, forearm, bicep, shoulder, or neck. The higher the left hand moves up the body, the greater the possibility for manipulation and control. For example, a left hand clasped around the neck may imply intimacy or ownership (Brown & Johnson, 2004).

Tips point out important points for you to remember.

**TIP**
The business card is often described as the handshake you leave behind. Make sure you leave a good impression.

Faux Pas and Good Idea! boxes provide stories about embarrassing and positive actions, respectively.

The globe icon denotes material that explains how etiquette may differ in other cultures.
Tables help itemize and illustrate concrete information.

### 1.1 Pecking Order for Introductions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Ranking</th>
<th>Lower Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VP of nursing</td>
<td>New nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-year employee</td>
<td>Two-year employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Daughter’s boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss</td>
<td>Your spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer in another office</td>
<td>Peer in your office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Colleague</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helpful frequently asked questions (FAQs) are included in each chapter.

**What do I do if I am being introduced to someone and that person sneezes into his right hand and then extends that hand for a hand-shake?**

You can shake the person’s hand and then go to the restroom and wash your hands. Or, you can say you are getting over a cold and would prefer not to shake hands.

Each chapter ends with “Take-Away Tips.”

### TAKE-AWAY TIPS

- Make an effort to remember names when meeting people.
- The most important thing to remember about introductions is to make them.
Finally . . .

“I never knew etiquette could be so much fun” is the most common response of people attending my professional etiquette presentations. The goal of this book is for you to learn (or recall) some career-enhancing material and to have fun at the same time.

You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by reading this book. As an example, Tom Corley (2016) did research on 177 average people who became self-made millionaires. Five key strategies that helped people get ahead are part of this book. The skills you learn can be put into practice immediately for career advancement and lifelong value.

Professional etiquette is not optional for personal or professional success. It is an essential part of your power base. You can benefit every day in clinical, business, and social settings by using Etiquette & Communication Strategies for Nurses to come across as polished, confident, and professional.
How Dining Etiquette and Business Success Go Hand-in-Hand

Seeing Through That Silverware Glare

DO YOU:

• Know which water glass is yours?
• Know what to do if you drop your fork on the ground?
• Know which fork to use first?
• Know what to do if you need to blow your nose at a meal?
• Know what to do if someone asks you a question and your mouth is full?

These are concerns that can make you feel flustered or uncomfortable during a meal. The fast-food world and the school cafeteria do not provide many opportunities for learning the finer points of dining etiquette. However, minding your manners can make a lasting impression in a business or formal setting. Read on for guidelines to make you feel more comfortable and confident while dining during business meetings, job interviews, wedding receptions, and other special occasions.

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RSVP

Do I need to respond to an RSVP?

Yes. See the RSVP discussion at the beginning of the previous chapter. If you don’t respond, the sender may think you have bad manners or that you did not get the invitation.

Place Settings and Dining Utensils

Where is my bread plate?

One of the challenges of dining with others is figuring out which bread plate belongs to you and which water glass is yours. Fortunately, several mnemonic devices can make it easy to remember your way around a formal dinner table (Pagana, 2005a; Pagana, 2006b):

- All food to the left of the entree plate belongs to you. This includes your salad, bread, and soup. An easy way to remember this is to note that food and left both have four letters.

- All drinks to the right of the entree plate are yours. This includes your water, wine, and coffee cup. An easy way to remember this is to note that drink and right both have five letters.

- If you can remember the expression “leftover bread,” you can remember that your bread is on the left.

- Place the tip of your right thumb and forefinger together to make a circle. Straighten your fingers, and your hand will form a small letter d. Do the same with your left hand, and it will look like a small letter b. The d stands for drinks and indicates that your drink glasses (water, wine, and coffee) are on the right of your entree plate. The b stands for bread and indicates that your bread plate is to the left of your plate.

- Another easy way to remember proper table setting positioning is to think of a BMW automobile. Here, instead of standing for Bavarian Motor Works, BMW stands for bread, meal, and water. Your bread is on the left, your meal is in the center, and your water glass is on the right.
Your bread, meal, and water appear in this order from left to right, just like the letters of a BMW automobile.

**Which fork should I use first?**

When it comes to dining utensils, a good rule of thumb is to work from outside to inside. The salad fork will be the smaller fork on the outside, and the larger dinner fork will be on the inside. Note that used utensils do not go back on the tablecloth. They are placed on the salad or entree plate.

**Faux Pas**

As an acknowledgement of her Award for Clinical Excellence, Lindsey was being honored at a banquet attended by the medical center administration. She was so overwhelmed and confused by the many pieces of silverware, china, and glasses that she could not enjoy the meal or the conversation. She worried the entire time about making an etiquette blunder and leaving a bad impression on the administrators.

**Faux Pas**

Mike had just finished his master’s degree. He was invited to a business lunch as part of the interview process. Mike overheard the person to his right asking the wait staff for a fork. He realized then that he was using the fork belonging to that person. He was embarrassed and worried about other etiquette blunders he may have committed.
What is the typical place setting for a four-course meal?

There are usually two forks to the left of the plate, two knives to the right of the plate, and a soup spoon to the right of the plate. (The smaller forks and knives are on the outside.) The soup spoon indicates that soup will be served first. After the soup spoon is removed, continue working from the outside in. The smaller fork and knife on the outside indicate that salad is the next course. After the salad, the larger fork and knife are used for the main course. The spoon and fork at the top of the place setting are for dessert.

When setting the table, which utensils go to the right and which go to the left of the entree plate?

Here are a couple of tips to help you (Post, Post, Post, & Post Senning, 2014):

- The fork is placed to the left of the plate. *Fork* has four letters and so does *left*.
- The knife and spoon are placed to the right of the plate. *Knife* and *spoon* have five letters and so does *right*.
- Think of the mnemonic *FOrKS*. The *O* represents your circular entree plate. The *F* stands for *forks*, which are placed to the left of the plate. The *r* indicates that the knives (*K*) and spoons (*S*) are placed, in that order, to the right.

When setting the table, does it matter which way the blade of the knife is pointing?

Yes. Place the sharp edge facing the entree plate.

Where do I put the napkin?

When everyone sits down at the table, napkins are placed on the lap. If you need to excuse yourself during the meal, place the napkin on your chair so others do not see your soiled napkin on the table. When the meal is finished and everyone is leaving the table, put the napkin to the left of the plate. If the plate is already removed, put the napkin where the plate was (Pagana, 2006c).
A waiter recently asked me if I wanted a black napkin. What was this about?

This is a nice gesture. Most restaurants set their tables with white napkins. Unfortunately, white napkins can leave white lint on dark clothing. Therefore, many restaurants also stock black napkins. If you see other patrons with black napkins, you can request one if you are wearing dark or black clothing. Often, in this situation, the waiter will ask you if you prefer a black napkin before you request one.

**Bread and Butter**

**Who should pass the bread around?**

If the bread is in a basket in front of you, pick it up and offer it to the person to your left. Then, take a piece yourself and pass it to your right. Or, you can just pick it up and pass it to your right (counterclockwise).

If someone already started passing the bread the wrong way, just go with it. Also, remember, as soon as you touch a piece of bread, it is yours. Do not reach into the basket and feel around for a hot roll on the bottom.

**How much bread can I butter?**

If the butter is being passed around, put a pat of butter on your bread plate. When eating the bread, tear off a piece. Then butter and eat one piece at a time.

Some restaurants feature special oil for bread. If so, pour or spoon out a small amount onto your bread plate. *Never* dip your bread into the community oil.

**What is the proper etiquette for handing a loaf of bread rather than individual pieces?**

Let’s start with what not to do. Do not pick up the bread with your bare hands and tear off a piece. Do use a cloth or napkin to hold the bread while you cut a few pieces with a knife. If you are served the bread without the cloth and knife, ask the waiter to bring them.
Soup and Salad

How do I handle the soup?

Many meals start with soup, which can be a challenge. Keep these points in mind:

• When eating soup, dip the spoon sideways into the soup toward the back of the bowl—that is, away from you. This technique prevents the soup from splashing onto your clothes.

• Skim the top of the soup with the spoon and sip from the side of your spoon, not from the front.

• Don’t crumble crackers into the soup. Take one bite at a time, just like with bread.

• You can tilt the bowl away from you to get the soup from the bottom of the bowl. If the soup bowl has two handles, you can pick it up and drink from the bowl. However, this method is not widely known or commonly done.

• If the soup is hot, don’t blow on it. Just wait until it cools down a bit. When you are finished, place your spoon next to the bowl on the plate. If there is no plate, leave the spoon in the bowl.

If the meal is during an important work meeting, it’s best to avoid soups that are messy and hard to eat. Even if you love French onion soup, don’t order it at a business meal. If it is pre-ordered, use your spoon to break the cheese against the back of the bowl so you do not stretch strings of cheese from the bowl to your mouth.

“At a dinner party, one should eat wisely but not too well, and talk well but not too wisely.”

—W. Somerset Maugham
Can I cut the salad?

Sure you can. Most salads do not have bite-sized pieces of lettuce. Therefore, use your knife and fork to cut the salad. Also, keep these points in mind:

• Be careful handling cherry tomatoes. Use one of the tines of your fork to poke into the stem area of the tomato. This will prevent the cherry tomato from shooting across the table when you cut it.

• If your salad has olives with seeds, use your fork to remove the seeds from your mouth and place them on the edge of your salad plate.

• If the salad dressing is in front of you, pick it up, offer it to the person on your left, serve yourself, and pass it to your right. Or, just pick it up and pass it to your right. The idea is not to serve yourself first.

Why should diners pass food to the right?

It simplifies dining when food is passed in one direction. Also, because most diners are right-handed, they receive the plate, basket, or salad dressing with their left hand, which leaves the right hand free to serve the food.

The Main Course

How many pieces of meat may I cut at a time?

This answer depends on whether you follow the American or Continental (sometimes called the European) style of dining. Although both are acceptable in the US, the American style is most commonly used. The Continental style is the norm outside of the US.

With the American style, sometimes called the zig-zag style, meat is cut with the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. (The opposite hands are used for a left-handed person.) Two or three pieces of meat are cut at a time. Then, the fork is switched to the right hand to eat the meat. The knife is placed across the top of the plate with the blades pointing inward.

With the Continental style, the knife is again placed in the right hand and the fork in the left hand. With this style, however, each piece of meat is consumed as it is cut. The silverware is not switched to the other hand.

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Do you have any tips for fast eaters?

If you notice that you are likely to finish your meal well before everyone else, you must slow down your eating. Here are some tips to slow down your eating:

- Put your utensils down while chewing your food.
- Take smaller bites.
- Engage more in conversation.

Do you have any tips for slow eaters?

It is important to keep pace with others at the table. If you are a slow eater, you need to pick up the pace. Here are some tips:

- While chewing your food, cut up food for the next bite.
- Take or order small servings.
- Answer questions in short sentences.
- Ask questions and eat while others talk.

Tips for Buffets

- Wait for the serving staff or host to direct your table to the buffet.
- Don’t overload your plate. You can always go back after everyone has gotten food.
- Don’t leave the serving spoon or fork in the serving dish. Place it on the saucer in front of the serving dish. This will prevent the handle from sliding into the serving dish.
- If you are the first one back to the table with food, wait for at least one other person to join you before you start to eat.
- Use a new plate when you return to the buffet.
- Don’t ask for a doggie bag.

![Faux Pas]

Several coworkers were eating dinner at an upscale restaurant in Philadelphia. One man pulled out some dental floss and flossed his teeth at the table. This uncouth behavior ruined the appetites of everyone else at the table. While this behavior may be acceptable in other areas of the world, it is not appropriate in Pennsylvania.
Table Manners Do’s and Don’ts

Do:

• Say “please” and “thank you.”
• Chew with your mouth closed.
• Pass the salt and pepper together.
• Place the salt and pepper shakers on the table in front of the person requesting them.
• Taste your food before seasoning.
• Wait for others to be served before starting to eat.
• Encourage others to start eating if your food is held up.
• Say “excuse me” if you have to go to the restroom during dinner.

Don’t:

• Put your elbows on the table.
• Rearrange the place cards on the table.
• Wave your utensils.
• Slurp your soup.
• Pick your teeth.
• Blow your nose on the dinner napkin.
• Put on lipstick or makeup.
• Comb your hair.
• Ask for a doggie bag at a business meal or buffet.
• Say, “I have to go to the bathroom.”

Is there a way to signal to the wait staff when I am finished with my plate?

Yes. You signal the wait staff by positioning your silverware on your plate in the finished, rather than resting, position. The finished position signals to the wait staff that the plate can be removed (Pagana, 2006a). In contrast, the resting position enables you to slow down and keep your plate on the table. This is particularly
useful if you are a fast eater. Removal of your plate from the table puts pressure on others to speed up.

So what is the finished position and what is the resting position? The answer to that depends on whether you use the American style or the Continental style of dining. If you use the American style, imagine a clock on your plate. To indicate that you are resting and do not want your plate removed, place the fork with its top pointed at 10 o’clock and the base at the 4 o’clock position. Place the knife across the top of the plate with the blade pointed inward. To indicate that you are finished, place the knife and fork in the 10 and 4 o’clock position with the tops of the silverware pointed at 10 and the bottoms pointed at 4.

To indicate a resting position, in the Continental style, place the fork and knife in an inverted V position. To indicate that you are finished, place the knife and fork in the 10 and 4 o’clock position with the tops of the silverware pointed at 10 and the bottoms pointed at 4. (This is the same as the American style.)

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**Faux Pas**

In her new position as vice president of nursing, Veronica was invited to a corporate dinner at an exclusive private dining club with the members of the board of trustees. She was served an exquisite meal by a doting wait staff. During the meal, she was asked a question, and she put her silverware on her plate. With an attentive wait staff, someone was there in a flash to whisk away her plate. Unfortunately, Veronica had placed her silverware in the finish position. She was stunned, and her facial expression gave away her surprise to her dinner partner, who was gracious enough to discreetly alert Veronica to the importance of handling silverware appropriately during a formal dinner. Veronica decided then and there to learn as much about dining etiquette as she could before the next dinner party.

**Do you have any recommendations for handling difficult foods in a formal setting?**

Yes. Don’t order them in a formal setting. Save them for eating at home or with friends in an informal setting. Remember, this is not your “last supper”! Here are some tips for some challenging foods (Pagana, 2006b):

- **Bacon**: Generally, you should use a fork. However, if the bacon is crisp, you may pick it up with your fingers.

- **Bananas**: Peel the banana, cut into slices, and eat it with a fork.

- **Cherries with pits**: Use a spoon to put the cherry into your mouth and to remove the pit from your mouth.

- **Cherry tomatoes**: Use the tine of the fork to poke into the area where the stem was attached. Then cut the tomato into pieces.

- **Corn on the cob**: Butter a few rows at a time. When you eat it, hold it with both hands.

- **French fries**: Cut them into bite-sized pieces and eat them with a fork.

**Faux Pas**

Barb and her husband went out to dinner with a work colleague, Denise, and her husband. While Barb was squeezing a lemon, the juice squirted across the table into Denise’s eyes. The discomfort was significant for Denise, and it was several minutes before the group could continue the meal. Barb was mortified. After that, she wasted no time in learning how to handle difficult meal situations such as squeezing lemons.
• **Lemons:** Cup the lemon in your hand to avoid squirting as you squeeze it over food or into drinks.

• **Parfait:** Start at the top and work your way down.

• **Pasta:** Use your fork to twirl a few strands against the edge of your plate.

• **Petits fours:** These are finger foods that are eaten in small bites.

• **Pork chops:** Use a knife and fork.

• **Watermelon:** Use a knife and fork. Use a spoon if the watermelon is shaped into small balls.

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**Coffee & Tea**

**Should I turn over my coffee cup to indicate that I do not want coffee?**

No, never turn over any plate, cup, or wine glass. Simply tell servers when they ask.

If you are repeatedly interrupted and asked this question from multiple servers, you can ask to have a cup and leave it untouched. You won’t be interrupted again.

**What are some tips for coffee etiquette?**

Coffee etiquette can vary around the world. Here are some general tips:

• Don’t cool a hot drink with ice from your water glass.

• Don’t dunk anything (biscuits, donuts) into your coffee unless you are in a really casual place where that is acceptable.

• Don’t leave your spoon in the cup. Place it on the saucer or plate.

**When the waiter brings a pot of hot water and you drop the tea bag into it, how long do you let it seep?**

Generally, tea should brew for three to five minutes. However, this also depends on the type of tea and your personal preference. Don’t pick up the tea bag by its string and jiggle it. Also, don’t wind the string around the bag while it is on your spoon and squeeze it.
What should I do with my tea bag if my tea is served in a mug?

Do not put the tea bag directly on the tablecloth. You have a few options here:

- You can place the tea bag on your dessert plate or other plate at your place setting.
- If you don’t have a place available, you can place the tea bag into the bowl of your spoon.
- You can ask the server for a plate for the tea bag.

What is the proper way to stir tea?

Place your spoon in a 6 o’clock position in the cup. Gently stir the tea toward the 12 o’clock position while being sure not to clink the spoon against the cup. Don’t leave the spoon in the cup. Place it on the saucer to the right of the cup.

When holding a tea cup, should your pinkie be up?

No. There is a misconception that outstretching the little finger aids the balance of the cup when taking a sip of tea. Keep the pinkie down!

Is it acceptable to dunk biscuits into my tea?

No. As with coffee, only do this in the privacy of your own house or in a very casual coffee shop.

Paying the Bill

Who pays the bill?

The host should pay the bill and leave the tip. (Be prepared, however, in case the host does not know this.) The host should be able to figure out the tip without using a calculator. Good service usually is acknowledged with an 18 to 20% tip. Apps are available for quick tip calculations. Some bills list the amount for suggested tips.
Good Idea!

Amy was planning to take her father and stepmother out for dinner to celebrate her father’s birthday. Two days before the dinner, she called to verify the reservation. While on the phone, she found out that the restaurant accepted only cash as payment. She had been unaware of this policy prior to calling to confirm the reservation and would not have had the necessary cash. Amy now asks about payment policies when she makes reservations.

Faux Pas

Colleen and four of her coworkers were invited to dinner by their manager to celebrate the completion of a successful project. Colleen ordered a soup and salad. The manager ordered prime rib. When the waiter gave the bill to the manager, he divided it by six and told everyone to pay an equal share of the bill. The manager’s inconsiderate decision was very upsetting for Colleen, because she only ordered what she knew she could afford. Since the manager invited Colleen and her coworkers out to dinner, he should have paid the bill.

What if the group ends up paying separately?

If everyone will be paying separately, inform the server before ordering to provide separate checks. For a shared check, be sure to have cash on hand to pay for everything you ordered, including tax and tip. If everyone ordered the same thing, divide the check after adding the tip.

Good Idea!

In her position as vice president, Candace often hosts meals for male and female colleagues. To avoid an uncomfortable moment when the dinner check arrives, Candace gives the maître d’ her credit card ahead of time and asks to have a 20% tip added. After the meal, she is presented the bill and merely has to sign it. She tells everyone that they are guests of the organization.
International Considerations

What are some considerations for dining in other countries?

When dining in other countries, you must consider many differences. These include the following:

- Where to sit at the table
- Where to place your hands during the meal
- How to signal when you’ve had enough food

See Chapter 14, “Going Global,” for details and examples.

Are there differences in tipping?

Yes. Outside the US, the tip is usually included in the bill. If the service was good, you can leave a little extra. Research the tipping practices of the country you are planning to visit beforehand. For example, in some countries, patrons just round the bill up to the next Euro or unit of currency.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where should women place their purses when dining?
   If the purse is small, it can go on the person’s lap, under the napkin. If it’s a large purse, she should put it on the floor between her feet or by her right foot, with the plan to exit the seat by the right side. Purses should not be placed on the backs of chairs. They can be in the way of the servers and also get stolen easily.

2. How do I let the waiter know when I am ready to order?
   Close your menu when you are ready to order. You can also catch the waiter’s eye and nod your head indicating that you are ready.

3. Should I turn over my coffee cup to indicate that I do not want coffee?
   No, never turn over any plate, cup, or wine glass.
What do I do when the silverware at the restaurant is wrapped in the napkin?
Carefully unwrap the napkin so you don’t drop the silverware on the floor. Then place the silverware where it belongs in the place setting. Forks go to the left of the plate and knives and spoons to the right. Put the napkin on your lap.

May I tuck the napkin into my collar?
No. However, you may lift your napkin up and cover your shirt for a few seconds when eating something messy. Men should not swing their tie around the back of their neck.

What foods should not be ordered at a business meal?
Avoid anything you do not know how to eat and anything messy. Examples of messy foods include spaghetti, barbecue ribs, and French onion soup. Eat messy foods on your own time and with your family and friends. Also, don’t order expensive food like lobster or steak unless the host encourages you.

Before going to a business meal at an unfamiliar restaurant, is it a good idea to get some information about the restaurant?
Yes, this would be helpful. You could do this online. You would be able to see the menu and learn about specialty dishes. You might also learn some local history about the place that would make for interesting conversation.

May I dip my bread into the sauce on my plate?
Tear off a piece of bread and put it on your plate. Use your fork to spear the bread, dip it into the sauce, and eat it.

Before passing the salt to someone across the table, it is OK to salt my food?
No. Pass the salt and pepper as a pair to the requester. Then, politely ask to have the salt passed to you. Both salt and pepper should be passed together to you.
May I ask for an extra condiment, such as ketchup, steak sauce, or dressing?
Yes. Don’t keep others waiting, however. Encourage them to start eating.

What if I have food in my mouth when someone asks me a question?
Point to your mouth and the questioner will get the hint. To take the pressure off you, the questioner should ask someone else a question so everyone isn’t looking at you and waiting for you to answer the question.

What should I do if I get a fish bone in my mouth?
Use your fingers to remove the fish bone. Place it on the edge of your plate.

How do I get a piece of meat gristle out of my mouth?
Most etiquette experts advise removing something from your mouth with the same utensils used to put it into your mouth. In this case, that would mean using your fork. However, many people do not feel comfortable doing this and remove the meat with one hand while using the napkin to block their mouth and dab their face with the other hand. Place the meat on the rim of your plate, preferably under a piece of garnish.

Should I tell a dinner partner if she has poppy seeds in her teeth?
Yes. People want to know this.

What should I do if my water glass or silverware seems unclean?
Don’t announce it to everyone at the table. Politely ask the server for a replacement.

Are there any conversational topics to avoid during a meal?
Yes! Avoid discussing religion, politics, health problems, and anything inappropriate. If someone raises one of these topics in conversation with you, change the subject. For example, say, “How are your plans coming along for your anniversary cruise?”
What should I do if I drop my fork under the table?

Leave it there so you are not disappearing under the table during the meal. Ask the wait staff for another fork.

What should I do if the server asks me to keep my knife when the table is being cleared?

You have two options here. One is to place your knife on your bread plate. (Never put a used utensil back on the table.) The other is request a clean knife for the next course (Post et al., 2014).

Is it polite for the meal guest to offer to pay the tip?

No. This is because the guest would have to know the cost of the meal to calculate the tip.

If I am expecting an important call or text message, is it OK to check my cellphone during dinner?

You would need to have a compelling reason to do this. If you do, inform the host of this possibility and reason before the meal. If you receive a message or call, excuse yourself from the table to handle the disruption.

Where should I place the dinner program at a business meal?

Nothing should be on the table except the food and service utensils. Therefore, place it on your lap under the napkin, in your purse, or on the floor.
TAKE-AWAY TIPS

- If you are trying to decide how much you can spend on your meal, ask your host for food recommendations. If the host plans to get filet mignon, you can feel free to order it also. Without any recommendations or suggestions, stay in the middle price range.

- When you sit at the table, enter your seat from the left and exit from the right. This is especially important at a round table when 8 or 10 people are entering and exiting their chairs.

- Food is delivered to the table on your left side and removed from your right side. An easy way to remember this is the two Rs: remove from the right.

- Pass all food to the right. It is easier if food is going in one direction.

- Leave the table if you need to blow your nose.

- Don’t chew gum at the table.

- When unsure of how to handle a certain type of food, sit back and watch others.

- Follow the lead of the host. If the host passes on dessert or coffee, you should, too.

- A business meal should focus on business more than food. Remember, this is not your “last supper.”

- When eating with international visitors, be respectful of different eating habits.
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