



Business Dining Etiquette

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Feel comfortable when dining in business and formal situations
- ✓ Feel more confident about your business communication in every situation
- ✓ Develop that extra edge to establish trust and credibility

Unit

Proper ways for Business Dining

Business Dining

Seven Hot Tips

Dining out can be tricky. Here, we have provided some tips that should apply in North America and most of Europe. If you're going somewhere else, or have people visiting, make sure you take the time to do some research so that you always appear polished and calm.

1. When inviting a client to lunch, remember that the restaurant you select is acting as an extension of your company. Therefore, make sure you select somewhere that you have eaten in before, where the food is of good quality and the service is reliable.
2. When escorted to a table, allow your guests to walk behind the host who is seating you. When finding a table on your own, take the lead.
3. Once everyone is seated, place your napkin on your lap. Don't leave it on the table until food arrives.
4. When making a food recommendation, recognize that most guests take cues from you regarding price range and alcohol. You can make recommendations before they start looking for cues from you to make everyone more comfortable.
5. When the server asks for your meal order before your guests', it's the perfect time to say, "I'd like my guests to order first." Besides being appropriate, it lets the server know that bill should be left with you at the end of the meal.
6. When reaching for the bread basket, salad dressing, etc., offer them to your guests before using them yourself.
7. Tip adequately. Treat the server as one of your employees. It's a small price to pay for good service, personal attention, and, hopefully, the contract that you land!

Common Questions

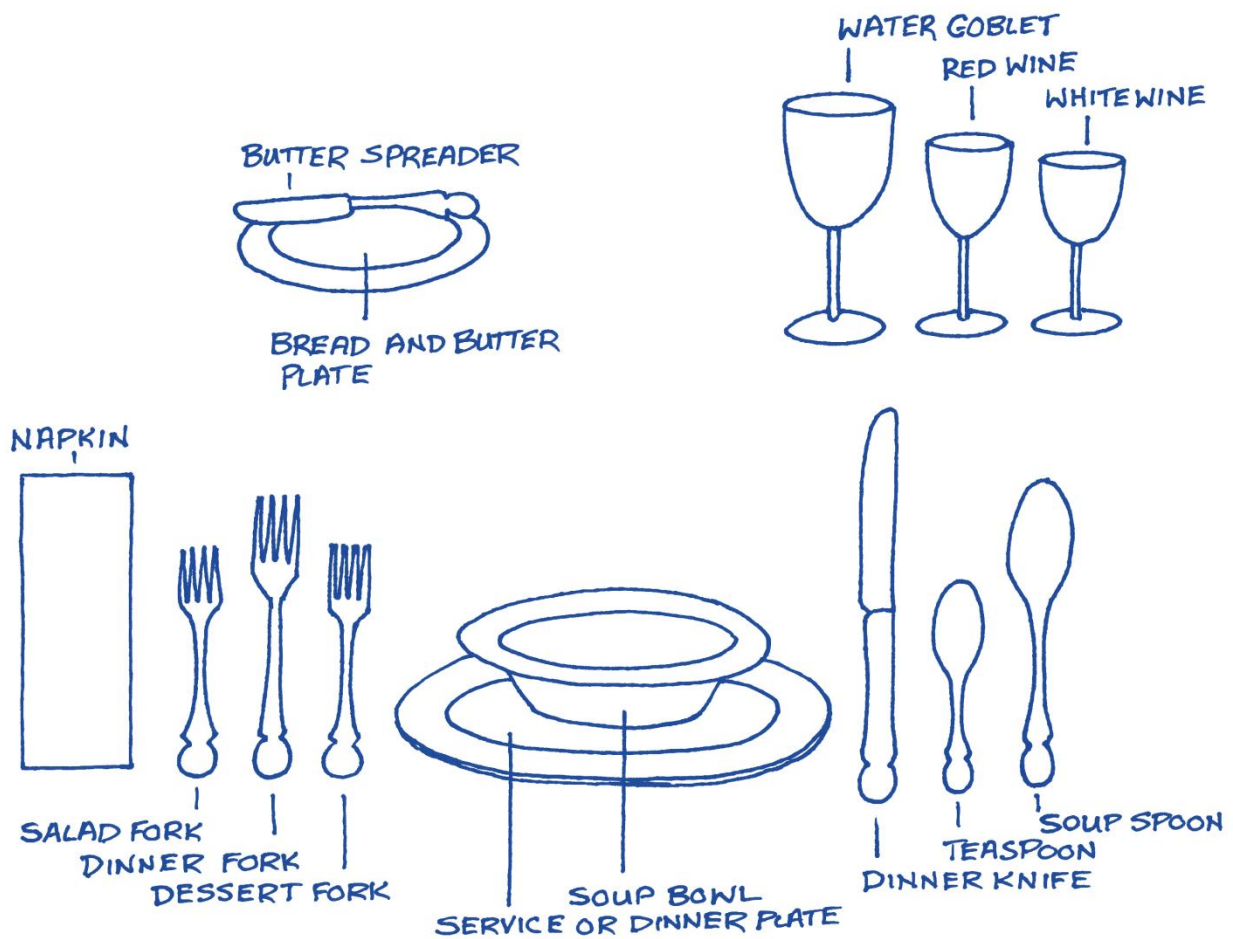
What are the rules for eating soup?

You've forgotten lunch with a business associate and are feeling very sheepish. You know they will be furious. What should you do?

- a) Write an apology note
- b) Send flowers or a bottle of alcohol
- c) Keep quiet and hope they forget about it
- d) Call, apologize, and set up another appointment

Demonstration

Here is what a typical Western place setting looks like:



Plates

If the table is preset when you arrive, there may be a large dinner plate (or place plate) already on the table. Everything else is measured and gauged from this plate. Your napkin may be on the plate, or to the left of the cutlery if there is also a bowl present.

Flatware/Cutlery

Flatware handles will be aligned at the bottom edge. Forks (normally two, but no more than three) are to the left of the plate. They are laid out in the order of use; you start on the far left and work your way in with each course.

In North America, the salad is usually served before the main course. In this case, the salad fork is the furthest from the plate on the left. However, if you are dining in a classic French style, the salad is served after the main course. In this case, the salad fork is positioned next to the plate.

Knives

Knives are placed to the right of the plate from the outside in, and in order of use. The cutting edge faces toward the plate. The spoons (for soup and tea or coffee) are placed to the right of the knives.

Glassware

You may find up to four glasses set on the table, again in order of use. From left to right (but positioned to the top right of the plate) you will see glasses for water, white wine, and red wine. If there is a glass for champagne, it is placed at the far right.

Note the shapes of each type of glass. They all have a unique shape and should only be used for their respective drinks.

Bread and Butter Plate

The bread plate will have the butter knife placed across the top of the plate, handle to the right, with the edge of blade toward the diner.

Salt and Pepper Shakers

If there are individual shakers, they are placed above the plate, with pepper to the left of salt. Larger salt and pepper shakers to be shared are placed slightly below the wine glasses and between every two place settings. If someone asks you to pass one or the other, always pass both together.

Table Manners

When you attend a banquet or conference, you may begin eating when the two people on either side of you have been served. If you haven't been served, but most of your table has, encourage others to start.

Reach only for the items that are right in front of you. Ask for other items to be passed to you, and then offer to pass them on. If you're feeling a little nervous, forget someone's name, or drop your fork, use it as a chance to have a laugh or break tension. One sign of someone who really knows their stuff and is a consummate professional is that they can make other people feel comfortable, regardless of what is going on, or who drops what.

Other Rules

Here are some other tips for dining for success.

At the end of the meal, you should place your used silverware close together on the plate, with the utensils entirely on the plate (less than an inch of the silverware over the side of the plate). This is a signal to the servers that your meal is finished and the dishes can be removed.

The correct way to cut your meat, whether eating American or continental style, is to grasp your knife and fork in a relaxed, natural manner, never with clenched fists. Hold your fork in your left hand, with the top of the fork toward your body, and use it to hold the item still. Cut the item by holding the knife behind the fork. Cut by moving the knife from side to side, without looking like you are fighting with your meal. Don't tear the food apart; use your knife to cut the item completely.

In American style eating, after cutting your meat, you put your knife down on the plate, switch the fork to your right hand, spear a piece of meat, and then eat it. In the **European eating style**, you keep your fork in your left hand and convey the food to your mouth after cutting each piece. The knife remains in your hand and may be used to get meat or any other food to stay in place.

Do not speak when your mouth is full. Do not slurp your soup or drinks. Do not rush your meal. Put your cutlery down on your plate before you take a drink. There is no need to hold onto your fork and a glass at the same time.

E-Mail and Telephone Etiquette

Group Exercise

Telephone (including cell phones) Etiquette Ideas

These tips will show you how paying attention to detail may make a big difference in others' impressions of you, both personally and professionally.

- **Identify yourself.** When calling someone, don't make them guess who you are. Telephones, particularly cell phones, can create a lot of distortion and make you hard to hear.
- **Respect others' time.** When placing a call, after identifying yourself, ask, "Do you have a minute?" or "Is this a good time to reach you?" before explaining the reason for your call.
- **Ask permission to put someone on hold.** Don't just make a statement like, "Hold, please."
- **After placing someone on hold and returning to the line,** say "Thanks for waiting." Allow them to acknowledge your return rather than saying, "I'm back," and jumping back into conversation.
- **When screening calls,** ask, "Who's calling, please?" rather than, "Who is this?"

When calling a professional office for any reason, always identify yourself and explain the reason for your call. Example: "Hello, this is Joyce Washington from the District of Columbia. I'm calling to inquire about business opportunities in Nova Scotia."

Call Waiting

Call waiting is a convenience. The way you use it can make you look good or bad. Just because you have call waiting does not mean that you have to take the other call; you need to make a decision. Your decision should be based on who you are speaking to, the intensity of the conversation, and your relationship to the person. If you find it necessary to place someone on hold due to call waiting, always ask permission first!

Reaching Voice Mail

When reaching an answering machine, if you had sufficient reason for calling, leave a message. Sometimes this helps the other person know how to respond: whether to expect another call from you or if they should attempt to return your call. "Hi, it's Julie, bye!" doesn't say anything, does it? If you are working with people who are dealing with the same number of messages you are, you'll understand their desire to return calls that are most important first.

When leaving a message, what you say, and how you say it is as important as if you were speaking to the person directly. Keep the tone of your voice pleasant and upbeat. Your message should include information on why you are calling and when it would be a good time to call you back.

When you leave the number where you can be reached, slow down. Give the person who is listening a chance to write it down. If yours is an out of region number, remember to leave the area code as well.

Use Good Speech Habits

Phrases To Use	Phrases Not To Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One moment please ● Yes ● All right ● She’s not available now ● Good-bye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hang on ● Yeah ● Okeydokey ● Uh, I dunno where he is

Remember that we’re discussing business etiquette here and not necessarily about how you talk to your best friend – although they deserve to be treated respectfully too!

Netiquette: Don’t Send and Offend

Since e-mail is such a huge part of our lives, it’s understandable to think we will make mistakes with it. However, since we are talking about etiquette, this is a good opportunity to make e-mail work better for you and to create the impressions you want.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you deal with technology:

- **Always respond to a real message.** Junk mail and forwards are one thing, but whether this is a business message, someone you have met at a networking function, or an old friend who just wanted to connect, take the time to respond.
- Use the **subject line** as a newspaper headline to convey the content of your message. If the subject of a particular conversation changes, update the subject line. Keep it short so it can be read on a handheld device (eight words is pushing the limit) and make sure it is meaningful.
- For professional communicators, the use of **emoticons** (happy faces and gestures) and **acronyms** like BTW (by the way) are way too informal. Not everybody appreciates them, and some e-mail programs will change your formatting from HTML to plain text. This can mean that a smiley face looks like a letter “J” and loses meaning, and people will struggle to figure out what you mean.
- Make your electronic messages **easy to read** and **easy to view**. Keep the font readable and in the 10-12 point range. Use paragraphs and bullets but no background wallpaper.
- Include your **signature** with your e-mail and telephone numbers so people do not have to look them up.
- E-mails should be kept **short**. Concisely written messages that stick to one subject tend to get read. When people are reading their messages on a small screen (such as a BlackBerry or smartphone), they tell us that they do not want to scroll through a long message.
- **“Reply to All”** and **“Send to All”** should be reserved for messages that really need to be read by an entire group. Use only when it is essential.

The Power of the Written Word

This might seem a little old fashioned, but it is gaining ground in some circles. The power of the written word – as in a hand-written note or card – cannot be overstated. In an age when we are exposed to a barrage of e-mail, electronic invoicing, and PDF documents, something hand-written stands out.

Who doesn't appreciate the personal touch of receiving a piece of mail that is on paper and hand written? A card that is ordered online, printed, stamped, and sent with your words, but not your personal writing, is just not the same as something that you write yourself.

Whether you decide to purchase an elegant set of notecards, have some personally monogrammed, or make them yourself, a handwritten note is something that people cherish. They put them up at work. They take them home to show their family.

Sadly, many of us struggle with how to word a note, get frustrated, and resort to e-mail or text messages, but it doesn't have to be that way.

To start, use your computer or some scrap paper to do a rough draft of the note. Keep your note short and to the point; three to six sentences is a good ballpark. If this is a thank you note, just thank the receiver one time. People tend to say thank you two or three times in one note, which is not only redundant, but can also look insincere.

Now write out the note on the real paper. If you are worried about writing in straight lines on a blank note card, don't. This is a personal note and it's not intended to look like it came off a printer. If you're still bothered, find note paper that has a very fine line, or hold a dark lined paper behind your notepaper so that you can see the line and keep your pen on track. Try to center it so there is a pleasant balance of white space to go with your text.

If you really cannot handwrite, you can practice or simply print it. We're not your sixth grade language arts teacher judging your writing!

If you're using stationery, make sure that it is printed with your name, telephone number, e-mail address, and street address. If not, write the information under your signature.

Note Writing Practice

Sample Thank You Notes

Dear Jean,

Thank you for picking me up at the airport on Thursday. I know it is out of your way and I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate that you were able to do this for me. Next time you go out of town, or if there is something that you need, I would be happy to return the favor.

Yours truly,

Petra

Dear Dr. Sharpe,

Thank you for speaking at our annual hunter-gatherer society luncheon. Your experience in the field as well as your passion for the topic made the time literally fly. It was inspiring for the young people in attendance, too. Several of them mentioned that they hope you will one day publish a book on the subject. If you do so, please let us know!

Sincerely,

Anna Flora

Writing Space

Draft Note One

Draft Note Two

Draft Note Three

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Foster, Dean. The Global Etiquette Guide to Europe. Wiley, 2000.*
- ✓ *High, Jana L. High-Tech Etiquette: Perfecting the Art of Plugged-In Politeness. Rawdon & Watson Publishing Company, 2002.*
- ✓ *Post, Emily, and Peter Post. Emily Post's The Etiquette Advantage in Business. William Morrow, 2005.*
- ✓ *Sabbath, Ann Marie. Business Etiquette: 101 Ways to Conduct Business with Charm and Savvy. Career Press, 2002.*
- ✓ *Templar, Richard. The Rules of Work. Pearson Education, 2003.*