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**GOLDEN RULES  
FOR  
DINING  
ETIQUETTE**

**Gaining the competitive  
advantage in business through  
etiquette.**



## WHY IS DINING ETIQUETTE IMPORTANT IN BUSINESS?

In addition to great job performance, applying good dining etiquette helps to establish your credibility and reputation.

Understanding etiquette rules helps you to navigate building relationships, building rapport, and allows you to focus on those that you are meeting. Familiarise yourself with the 'golden rules' and you will be on the path to business success.

### Before the Meal

- Arrive at least 10 minutes early - never show up late.
- Check your physical appearance. Straighten ties, check for buttons being undone.
- Dress according to the invitation or suggestion by the host. If no dress code is indicated, ask before the event or assume business professional.
- Turn off all mobile/ cell phones.
- Wait for the host to ask you to sit down before taking your seat. If they do not ask, wait for him/her to be seated, then sit.
- Place items such as briefcases, handbags, umbrellas, keys, or personal items under the table.

# GOLDEN RULES DINING ETIQUETTE



## Conversation

- Engage in table conversation that is pleasant but entirely free of controversial subjects.
- Never tell jokes. You never know who you could offend.
- Use this time to network. Talk about hobbies and interests.
- Begin discussing business after a rapport has been established and meal has been ordered.

## Posture

- Sit up straight; do not slouch or lean over the table.
- Your feet should rest flat on the floor; not crossed or wrapped around the chair legs.
- Do not rock back in the chair.
- Elbows on the table are only acceptable between courses when there is no plate in front of you.
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap.

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Etiquette makes a difference to the way you are perceived.

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# DINING ETIQUETTE

## PLACE SETTINGS



The place setting serves much like the road map for your meal. When you sit down, you can look at the way the table is set to figure out what courses you will be eating, and which beverages will be offered. To help you navigate your place setting, simply remember these basic rules of thumb:

1. Utensils are arranged in the order a person will use them—work your way from the outside in.
2. The salad knife and fork (or the soup spoon if soup is served) will be used first, then you will move towards the plate and continue with the main course by using your dinner knife and fork.
3. If dessert is ordered, you will then use your dessert fork and spoon located horizontally above the main plate.
4. Do not finger or rearrange the silverware or glassware.
5. Never wave your fork or knife around or use as props.
6. Never place used silverware back on the table.
7. If a piece of silverware falls on the floor, do not pick it up. Discreetly ask the server to bring you another one.



# DINING ETIQUETTE

## NAPKINS & SERVIETTES



- If you need to excuse yourself from the table, leave your napkin on the seat of your chair or folded and placed to the left of your plate. Do not ball up a napkin and toss it on the table.
- When the meal is over, loosely fold your napkin put it to the left of your place setting. The most appropriate time to do this is as everyone is rising from the table.
- The napkin should be folded and placed on your lap with the fold towards you. When you first sit down for the meal, wait for the host/hostess to place his or her napkin on their lap before you do the same.
- Never tuck the napkin into your clothing, either at the waist or chin.
- If a napkin falls on the floor, politely ask the server to bring you another one.
- The napkin is used to blot your mouth, not serious wiping, and never for blowing your nose. If you must blow your nose, please excuse yourself from the table.
- For ladies, if you are concerned about your lipstick coming off on your napkin, blot it with a tissue before you come to the table.

# DINING ETIQUETTE

## FOOD & BEVERAGE



- Order simple foods that are easily eaten with a fork and a knife. Avoid awkward, messy, or exotic foods.
- It is best not to order finger foods or anything with bones.
- Don't order the most expensive items on the menu. If you aren't sure which price range to adhere to, follow the lead of the host.

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Avoid ordering the most expensive dishes on the menu.

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- Do not change your order once it is made, and never send the food back.
- If you have allergies or food restrictions and if you know in advance the restaurant where you will be dining, look up the menu and make a list of possible foods that will not hinder your allergy or dietary restrictions.
- If you are served food that you cannot eat, eat what you can and leave the rest on your plate.

# DINING ETIQUETTE

## THE ART OF EATING & CONVERSATIONS



**"Chew with your mouth closed.  
Always."**

- You may begin eating when the host/hostess picks up their utensils.
- Remember that business meals are not about the food—they are about business first.
- Be polite to serving staff, make eye contact and say, "excuse me" to get their attention as needed, and "please and thank you".
- Take small bites and never speak with food in your mouth. If a question is asked of you mid-bite, take a moment to chew and swallow your food. It is better to speak after a few seconds than to immediately blurt out your answer with a mouth full of food.
- Pace your eating. Pay attention to how fast or slow the other diners are eating so you do not finish way ahead of them or lag behind.
- Never chew with your mouth open or make loud noises when you eat.
- If a piece of food happens to slip off your plate, discreetly place it back on the corner of your plate. If it is a small piece of food or salad, leave it where it is.



# DINING ETIQUETTE

## THE ART OF EATING & CONVERSATIONS

- Always pass salt and pepper shakers together.
- Do not salt your food before first tasting it.
- Do not use salt and pepper yourself before passing it.
- Do not blow on your food. If food is too hot to eat, let it sit until it cools.
- Spoon soup away from you when you take it out of the bowl and sip from the side of the spoon. When you have finished the soup, always place the spoon on the saucer under the soup bowl.
- Bread should be eaten in bite-sized pieces. Tear off one small bite-size piece and butter only the piece you are preparing to eat.
- Do not use lipstick, makeup, floss, combs, or toothpicks at the table.
- Do not push plates away or stack empty plates when finished.
- Where you place your utensils on your plate indicates whether you are resting between bites or have finished eating and are waiting for your plate to be removed.
- If you are resting between bites, place your knife horizontally at the top of your plate, blade facing in. Your fork is placed in the lower right-hand portion of your plate.
- To indicate that you are done eating, bring the knife down to rest beside the fork in the lower right-hand corner of your plate.

**"Do not push your plate away from you when you have finished eating."**



# FACILITATED TRAINING

## GOLDEN RULES OF DINING ETIQUETTE

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## GOLDEN RULES OF DINING ETIQUETTE

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Gaining the competitive  
edge with dining etiquette.

Learner handout