

Projecting a Professional Image

Maintaining a professional image before, during, and after an interview can make the difference between getting and not getting a job.

“Be one step ahead, practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.”

- Kenitra Matheson, Director of Human Resources, Dellinger and Deese Services



Sally thought it was okay to sit in the lobby and talk on the phone while waiting to be interviewed. Later she learned her overheard conversation about “that job is mine” cost her the position.

John was perfectly qualified for his internship with the federal government but the day before he was scheduled to move, he received a call saying the internship was no longer his. They had seen his crude remarks and inappropriate pictures on his online social networking profile.



MEETING NEW PEOPLE

Focus on your verbal and non-verbal behavior

- Use a firm, 3-4 second (but not overly strong) handshake.
- Typically the person with the highest authority will initiate the handshake, but anyone may.
- If you are introducing a client to someone in your organization, introduce the client name first.
- Make eye contact. It conveys you are trustworthy, shows your confidence, and lets the other person know you respect him or her.
- If you are seated when being introduced rise, smile, and extend your hand.
- Use your new acquaintance’s name when you speak directly to him or her. This will establish rapport and will help you remember them in the future.
- Be sensitive to those culturally different than you.
- If you are in another country, learn the appropriate etiquette before you go.



NAMETAG KNOWLEDGE

- A nametag should be worn on your right side, front shoulder area so that others see it clearly especially when shaking hands.
- If your nametag is on a cord worn around the neck, adjust the strap so that it can be seen easily and the person you are meeting will not have to look down.

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TELEPHONE TALK



- Always try to return a call the same day.
- Do not keep someone on hold more than 30 seconds.
- Always give your phone number if asking someone to return your call.
- When leaving a voicemail, make sure to speak clearly and say your name and number TWICE.
- Actively listen to the person on the other line...take notes!
- Turn off your cell phone during a class, interview, or event.

CORRESPONDENCE

REMEMBER - *It is important to follow up meetings and interviews* (whether you have just met or known the person for a length of time) with written correspondence.

Write a follow-up letter or thank-you note within 48 hours (sooner if possible). The note can be handwritten or formal, but always follow these guidelines: women should be addressed as "Ms.", if you do a formal (typed) letter, do not forget to sign your name, and always proofread for typos. *Check out the sample Thank You Note on page 30.*



Email Etiquette-Specific Guidelines

If you choose to communicate via email, there are several things to consider:

- Never use all caps
- Never send negative messages via email. They are better reserved for discussion in person.
- Watch and re-read for typos.
- Make the subject line meaningful. For example, instead of "Important Information" write "Important Information re: New Employee Orientation."
- Make sure the email signature clearly says who you are.
- Always include alternate ways to contact you.
- Be concise and to the point.
- Email is not private. Do not send anything you would not want others to read.
- Never use abbreviations like "u" or "4" instead of "you" or "for."

SOCIAL EVENTS

- RULE #1** - At a reception or social hour, if there are no tables, you should only have either food or a drink (not both) at any given time.
- RULE #2** - Hold a drink in your left hand so your right hand will be dry and ready to shake.
- RULE #3** - Hold food in your right hand and eat it with your left. When approached by another person you can put your food in your left hand as your right will be clean.
- RULE #4** - If tables are available, you can have food and drink together. Be prepared to stand if you are approached.
- RULE #5** - It is your responsibility to greet or introduce yourself to the host/hostess.
- RULE #6** - At an office party, keep in mind good behavior. These are the people you see and work with daily. Do not discuss business unless asked to do so by your boss. A party is a time to get to know more about your co-workers and improve office morale.

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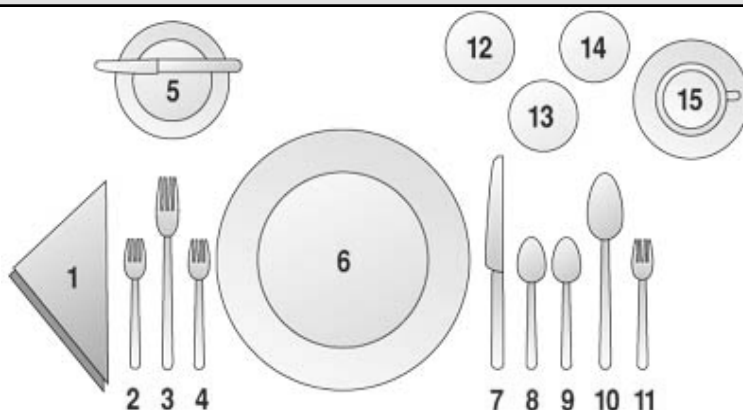
DINING ETIQUETTE

If you are going to a dinner, here are the basics everyone should know:

- Let the host take the lead, i.e. first bite, first sip.
- Ask for suggestions when ordering if you are unfamiliar with the menu. By asking, you will also be able to get a guideline for the host's price range. It is customary to avoid the most expensive or least expensive item.
- Typically the person who initiates the meal will pay. Do not forget to say "thank you."
- Avoid difficult or messy food like spaghetti.
- Do not order an alcoholic beverage. It may portray a negative image. At a cocktail hour, you may drink one or politely decline. At times, wine will be served with the meal. Sip it slowly throughout the meal.
- Do not spit out food in your napkin. Remove it the same way it went in, and place the discarded food on the side of your plate.
- Take small bites so you can carry on a conversation without delay because of chewing.
- When in doubt of what utensil to use or how to eat a certain food, watch your host or hostess.



PLACE SETTING



1. Napkin*
2. Salad Fork
3. Dinner Fork
4. Dessert Fork**
5. Bread & Butter plate
6. Dinner Plate
7. Dinner Knife
8. Teaspoon

9. Teaspoon**
10. Soup Spoon
11. Cocktail/Seafood Fork
12. Water goblet
13. Red Wine Glass
14. White Wine Glass
15. Coffee Cup and Saucer***

*Can also go on the dinner plate

**Can also be placed horizontally above the dinner plate

***May be brought out with dessert

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DINING DICTIONARY



Napkin - After all of your dinner party has been seated, place your napkin in your lap. If the napkin needs to be unfolded, do so close to your lap (not over the table or in mid-air). If the napkin is large and you leave it folded, the crease should be placed towards your body. If you leave the table before dinner is over, DO NOT place your napkin on the table. Place it in your seat. When you are finished with your meal and your party is leaving the table (everyone is finished), place the napkin to the right of your plate...not on the plate. The napkin should be left in your lap at all times, except when blotting (not rubbing) your lips.

Receiving Your Food - Do not eat before everyone at the table has received his or her food. If someone who has not received his or her food tells the rest of your party to eat, do so slowly until his or her food arrives. If you are part of a multiple table party, you must only wait until your table is served to begin eating, not the entire party.

Soup - When eating soup, spoon the soup away from you then bring to your mouth. Sip (don't slurp) the soup from the side of the spoon. Do not stick the entire spoon in your mouth. NEVER pick the soup bowl up off the plate/table. When you are finished, place your spoon on the saucer. Do not leave it in the cup.

Sorbet - At some restaurants sorbet (similar citrus flavor to sherbet) is served between courses to cleanse your palate. You may eat it with a fork or spoon.

Utensils - There are two acceptable ways to use your utensils... Continental fashion and American standard. *Continental fashion*-the diner cuts the food one bite at a time and then uses the fork in the LEFT hand, tines down, and then spears the food and brings it to the mouth. *American standard*-the diner cuts two or three bites at a time, the knife is laid across the top of the plate, sharp edge toward you, and the fork is switched to the right hand, if you are right-handed, hold the tines up and bring the food to the mouth.

To show you are finished with your dinner, lay your fork and knife diagonally across your plate with the sharp edge of the knife facing the center of the plate and the fork tines facing downward. They should sit at 10:00 and 4:00 on your plate.



Passing - When passing food or condiments, pass to your right (unless one person requests something and he or she is immediately to your left). ALWAYS pass the salt and pepper together, even if only one is requested. Pass items with handles (such as gravy) with the handle towards the recipient.

Seasoning - Always taste your food before adding any seasoning, including salt and pepper. Do not assume it needs additions. Adding before tasting is considered an insult to the chef.



Sweeteners - Do not be excessive with sugar or sweetener packets. Typically use no more than two per meal. Tear off just a corner when using and place empty packets to the side.

Buffets - At a buffet select the items you enjoy but do not overload your plate. Select a variety of items.

Bread - Bread, rolls, muffins, or biscuits should never be eaten whole. Items already buttered such as toast or garlic bread may be eaten whole. Bread and rolls should be broken into smaller, bite size pieces and buttered with each bite. If you must take butter from a community dish, place the butter on your bread and butter plate, not directly on the bread. Muffins and biscuits may be broken crosswise, buttered and then put back together. However, when you actually eat the muffin or biscuit break it in to smaller pieces.

Pre-Set Meals - At some dinners you will find that the host or hostess has already selected the dinner selection. If you find yourself in a situation where you are allergic to a food (seafood, nuts, etc.) or if religious or vegetarian issues arise, quietly deal with these when the server is at your side. If you are a vegetarian, ask for a vegetable plate; with allergies or other conflicts ask if there is another option and be prepared to offer suggestions and preferences. Do not request another dinner just because you do not like what you are given. Always try a little of the items served.

Finished - When you are finished with a course, do not push your plate away or stack multiple plates.



Do not get overwhelmed with all the rules. If you forget or are unsure watch others around you and use common sense.