



Table Setting Guidelines

4-H Youth Development

999-06

An attractively set table is almost as important to a great meal as the food. The way the table is set can influence how people feel about the meal by adding to the appeal of the food being served. Even a well-cooked meal is made more appetizing when it is served in an attractive setting.

When planning your table setting, be creative; let your personality shine through! You don't have to go out and buy new things. Use what you have at home or borrow from friends and family. Just remember that you must be able to eat safely from all tableware.

Plan ahead. Plan your place setting and practice at home. Consider taking a photo of the setting or draw a sketch to help you reassemble it at the fair.

Terminology

Appointments: all items used to set the table (i.e. tablecloth, placemat, napkin, dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and centerpiece)

Cover: the space allotted for one person.

Dinnerware: plates, bowls, and other dishes

Flatware: knives, forks, and spoons

Glassware: drinking glasses

Place setting: the arrangement of the tableware for a single meal. Each setting should fit within a standard 24" wide x 15" deep space.

Tableware: the dishes, flatware and glassware used in setting a table

The Menu

Before you plan your menu, there are three questions to ask yourself:

1. What meal do I want to serve? (i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner, after-school snack)
2. Am I planning for a special occasion? (i.e. birthday, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day)
3. Will the meal be formal or informal?
 - A formal meal is a six or more course. Most formal menus include an appetizer, soup, salad, a starch, a protein, and a dessert. In a formal setting some flatware pieces may be cleared and others added. The formal setting is the only one where a charger may be used. The setting should not include a placemat or coffee mugs.
 - An informal meal is a generally a three-course menu that includes a starter such as a salad, soup or appetizer, the main course, and a dessert. All the flatware is placed on the table at the same time.

All items on your menu should be dishes you are able to prepare yourself. Make sure the meal is well-balanced. Be prepared to answer questions about the recipes and their nutritional value.



A well-planned menu is nutritionally balanced as well as balanced in color, flavor, texture, temperature, and size/shape. Thinking about these things will help you plan a meal that is appealing to look at as well as eat. Consider these common errors:

- Nutrition: too many foods from one food group; missing food groups
- Color: no color variation; clashing color scheme
- Flavor: too many bland flavors or too many strong flavors; all sweet or all sour foods
- Texture: all soft, hard, chewy, or crisp foods
- Temperature: no temperature contrast
- Size/shape: too many foods of similar shape and size; no variety
- Preparation methods: repetitive (i.e. all fried foods)

The Menu Card

The menu should be printed or neatly written on a card approximately 5”x7”. The menu can be incorporated into your table decoration. Be creative! However, menu items must be listed in the order they will be served. Group the foods served in one course. Use single line spacing between food items in one course and double spacing between courses.

When writing your menu, use capital letters at the beginning of all words except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Use descriptive terms to give information about the food items (grilled, broiled, steamed, iced, etc.). If it fits your occasion, be creative in naming your menu items.

Examples:

Green Salad with Ranch Dressing
Grilled Chicken and Wild Rice
Steamed Broccoli
Rolls with Butter
Cheesecake with Fresh Mixed Berries
Sparkling Cider and Water

<u>Space Adventure Birthday</u>
Countdown to Corn Dog
Astro Chips
Milky Way Fudge Brownies
Out of This World Root Beer

The Overall Table Setting

- A set table looks appealing when items are in scale with each other and the table.
- The table setting should appear balanced in size, shape and color.
- Use only the tableware required by the menu.
- Items used in your table setting do not need to be expensive; they just need to be appropriate to your theme.

Table Coverings

The table covering is the background on which everything is placed. You can use a tablecloth, a placemat, or both. Choose something that is appropriate for the occasion. Match or blend colors and textures with the dinnerware.

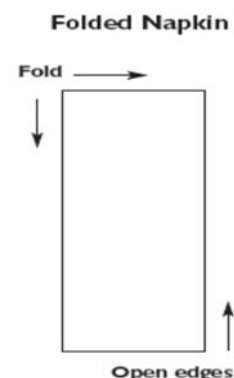
If you use a tablecloth, it should have an 8” to 10” drop. Be sure it hangs evenly. If you use a placemat, place it even with the edge of the table or no more than ½” from the edge. Whatever you use must be clean and wrinkle-free.

Napkins

Napkins should color-coordinate with the rest of the table setting. They must be clean and wrinkle free.

The napkin should be placed so that it will not disturb any flatware when removed. Usually, this means the napkin can be placed on the plate or to the left of the dinner fork. Do not put the napkin in a glass, and do not place anything on top of the napkin.

Napkins folded into a rectangle or square should be placed to the left of the fork with the open corner at the bottom right. If a napkin ring or fancy fold is used, the napkin may be placed on the plate or to the left of the fork. Creative folds are encouraged.



Dinnerware

Dinnerware must be safe and clean. If your dinnerware has a pattern other than a simple, continuous band, be sure to arrange it so that the pattern is facing the guest. Dinnerware may be mixed and matched. Choose two colors or collect various sizes and shapes for interest. However, no more than two shapes, sizes or colors should be used at one time.

Remember to only put on the table what is actually needed for the meal. Use the following guidelines for placing the dinnerware:

Dinner plate: place in the center of the setting, one inch from the edge of the table

Salad plate: place to the left of the fork(s) and about 2 inches above the fork(s) If salad is the first course, put the salad plate on top of the dinner plate.

If the salad is a fruit or jello salad, you may use a small bowl instead of a plate.

Bread and Butter plate: place a little to the left of the top of the fork.

If you are using both a salad plate and a bread and butter plate, the bread and plate is placed at the top left, above the salad plate. The salad plate is placed at the lower left, above the napkin. A bread and butter plate is smaller than a salad plate.

Soup or Cereal Bowl: place on top of the dinner plate

Cup and Saucer or Coffee Mug: place one inch to the right of the teaspoon. The top edge of the saucer should align with the top of the dinner plate.

Cup handles should be on the right.

Coffee mugs are not appropriate for formal meals.

Flatware

The type of flatware used should be appropriate to the occasion. For example, plastic would be appropriate for a picnic but not for a formal meal. All flatware used must be clean and safe. Do not put any flatware on the table that is not necessary for the meal.

Knives and spoons are placed to the right of the plate and forks to the left. Flatware should be placed in the order they will be used starting from the outside, away from the plate. All flatware should be lined up evenly with the bottom of each piece one inch above the bottom of the placemat or table edge. (This should line up with the bottom of the dinner plate.) There should be about ½" between each piece of flatware, and the inside pieces should be ½" from the plate.

Knife: The knife should be placed ½" away from the plate with the cutting edge toward the plate.

Dinner fork: The dinner fork is placed left of the plate, ½” away.

Salad fork: If needed, it should be placed to the left of the dinner fork. A salad fork usually has a shorter handle than a dinner fork.

Teaspoon: The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.

Soup spoon: If needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon. A soup spoon is usually larger than a teaspoon with a more rounded bowl.

Butter knife: If needed, it should be placed across the top of the bread and butter plate, parallel to the table and with the blade facing the dinner plate.

Dessert flatware: Dessert flatware is generally thinner and smaller than dinner flatware. For informal meals, the dessert flatware may be placed on the plate at the time of serving or may be laid just before dessert is served. For a formal meal, a dessert spoon is placed horizontally about one inch above the place setting with the handle facing right. A dessert fork is placed below the dessert spoon, facing the opposite direction.

Chopsticks: If appropriate to the meal, chopsticks may be used. Each culture has a unique way of presenting the chopsticks. However for the United States they are generally placed with the pointed ends facing to the left with the points supported by a chopstick holder. They may be placed anywhere within the place setting.

Glassware

Glassware must be clean with no water spots or fingerprints. Be sure there are no chips.

It is assumed that water will be served at every meal, even if it is not listed on the menu. Therefore, you must always have a water glass at your table setting. In addition to the water glass, you will need to provide a glass for every beverage on your menu.

The largest glass on the table should be the water glass. It is placed about two inches above the tip of the dinner knife. If you are serving more than one beverage, the other glasses are placed to the right of the water glass, either in the order they will be served or in a triangular formation.

If the glassware does not completely fit on a placemat, it is better to set them completely off the placemat on the table. This will keep the glasses level and avoid spills.

Frozen or iced beverages should be placed on a 7” - 8” plate. A spoon that is long enough to touch the bottom of the glassware should be placed diagonally on the right side of the plate.

Centerpiece

While not required, a centerpiece can bring the entire table setting together. Create a centerpiece that is appropriate for the occasion, coordinating the style and color with the rest of your table setting. Remember that simplicity is the key to beauty. Consider the size of the table and place setting when creating the centerpiece, being careful to not crowd the table.

Centerpieces must be low enough for people to easily see each other across the table. The centerpiece can be viewed from all sides and needs to be appealing to all diners.

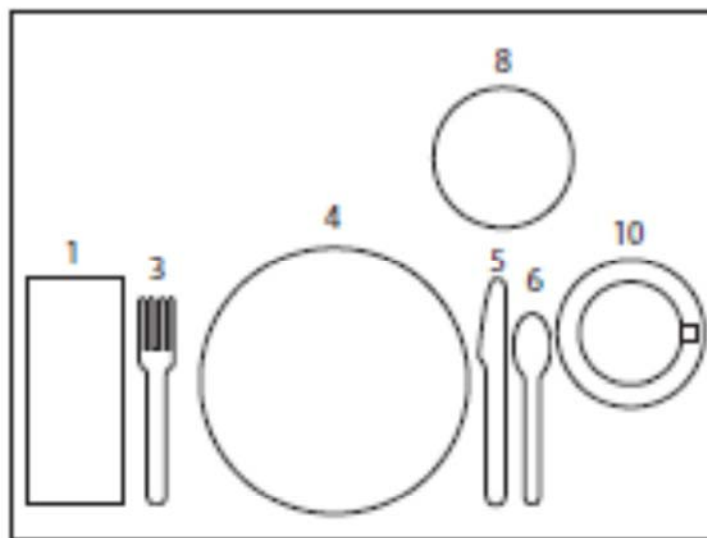
Decorations should not touch anything else. Nor should they be placed where they can shed or droop over the food.

Flowers and candles are often used as centerpieces, but consider unusual or unique items. Pinecones, cattails, dried flowers, toys, artifacts, fruits, etc. can all be used to decorate your table. Beware, however, of bugs, dirt, loose sand, glitter or beads that could get into the food. Also, be sure that any scent from your centerpiece is not offensive or will not clash with the odors from the food.

The centerpiece may be centered at the top of your table setting or be placed off to the side.

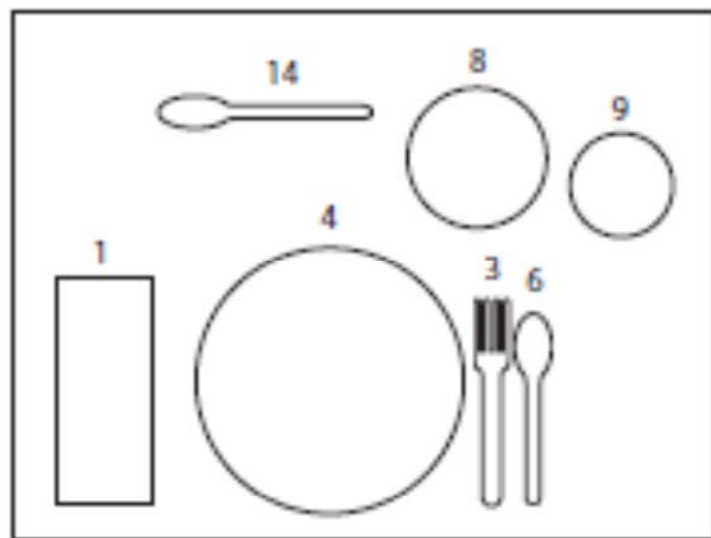
TABLE SETTING EXAMPLES

1. Informal



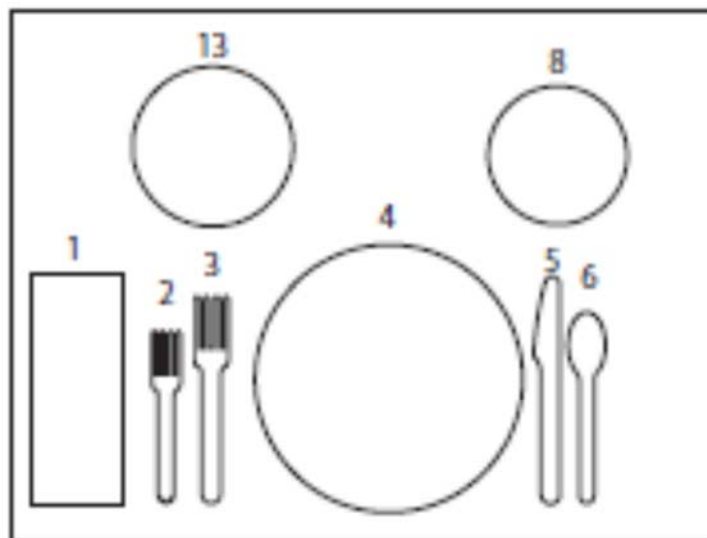
Napkins, utensils, and plate are lined up evenly about 1 inch from edge of table. Water glass is above the tip of the knife.

3. Informal



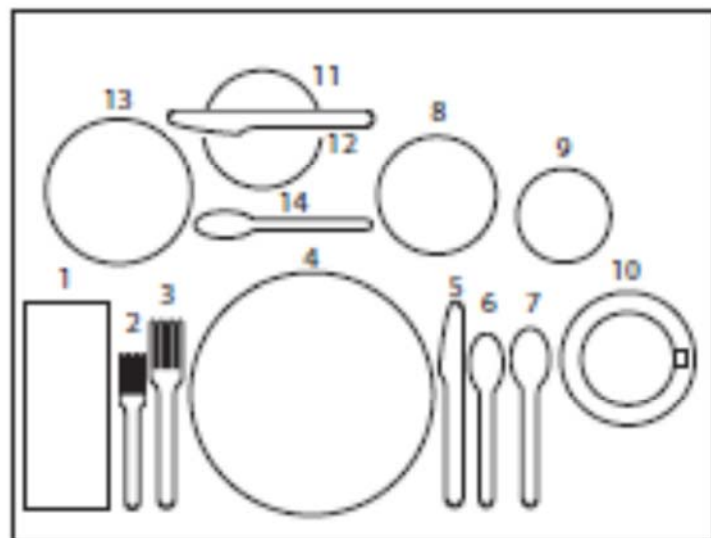
When no knife is needed, the fork may be placed to the right of the plate.

2. Informal



A salad plate is placed above the fork and a salad fork to the left of the dinner fork.

4. Formal



With limited table space, the bread and butter plate and the salad plate can be placed above the napkin and forks. A soup spoon and a beverage glass are also added.

Key to diagrams:

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|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Napkin | 5. Knife | 10. Cup & saucer/mug |
| 2. Salad fork | 6. Spoon | 11. Bread & butter plate |
| 3. Dinner fork | 7. Soup spoon | 12. Butter spreader |
| 4. Plate | 8. Water glass | 13. Salad plate |
| | 9. Additional beverage glass | 14. Iced tea spoon |