

Creative Table Setting

Importance of Setting a Table

Mealtime is not only a time to nourish the body, but also a time to relax and enjoy the food and the company. The evening meal, especially, is often the only time when families touch base and share schedules and activities.

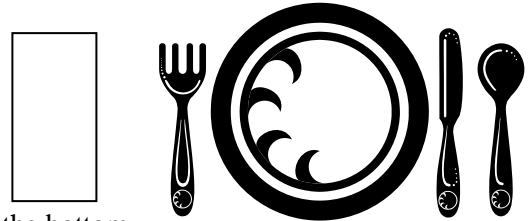
Even a simple soup and sandwich can taste better if served in attractive surroundings. The Table setting can help create the mood for the meal.

Table settings do not need to be expensive or “fancy”. The food to be served determines what utensils are used. Imagination and variety can add to the enjoyment of the food.

Table setting rules are flexible, but knowledge of these rules creates self-confidence for the host and makes dining more pleasant for the guest.

What is a table setting?

The napkin, dinnerware, glassware and flatware to be used by one person make up a “cover” or place setting. *Use only those necessary for the foods you plan to serve.*



- When setting a table, allow 24” of width for each person and place the bottom tip of dinnerware and flatware about one inch from the edge of the table or placemat. This amount of space permits comfortable eating at a picnic table or other setting as well.
- Arrange flatware in the order of use, working toward the plate from each side. In a basic cover, forks are placed at the left, tines up; the knife is at the right with cutting edge toward the plate. Spoons are arranged at the right of the knife, bowl up.
- The beverage glass (or goblet) goes above the point of the knife.
- The napkin is usually at the left of the setting; it is also found in the center of the plate or used as a decorative accessory. Wherever it is located, it should be easy to unfold and convenient to use.

Choosing Your Table Setting. The basic setting may not be suitable for the menu you have chosen. Kitchen cabinets are like clothes closets, they contain a ‘wardrobe’ of dinnerware for you to choose from.

Dinnerware may be china, stoneware, ironstone, plastic, glass, or paper. Interesting and useful pieces can also be found of wood, stainless steel, silver plate and other materials.

- **Meal plates** are found in different sizes (dinner, luncheon or breakfast). Many families may have only the dinner size. These are placed in the center of the setting.
- **Butter plates**, if used, are placed directly above the fork. For this competition, use a butter plate unless the meal is very informal.
- **Cup and saucer** are provided for tea or coffee if this is part of the menu. The cup and saucer are placed outside the flatware on the right of the plate.
- **Salad plates** are placed above or next to the fork if a butter plate is used.
- **Dessert plates** are placed in the center after clearing away other dinnerware. These may be displayed in the center of the plate for this competition.
- **Soup bowls** are placed in the center on a small plate. If your place setting includes both soup and dessert, place the dessert dishes to the right or at the top of the table setting and note this on your description card. Also read the section on flatware (dessert fork and spoon).

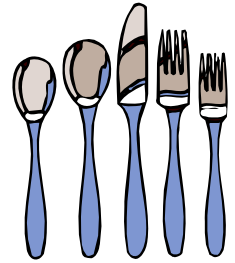
Glassware may be clear glass, milk glass, colored glass or crystal. Plastic and paper can be used if suitable or if needed to carry out a theme.

- **A water, iced tea, milk glass (or goblet)** is placed above the knife. If there is more than one, put the one used first on the right.
- **The juice glass** is placed to the right of the beverage glass or above the plate.
- **A wineglass or goblet** is placed to the right and below the beverage glass or it can be placed above the plate.

Flatware is also called hollowware. It may be made of silver, silver plate, or stainless steel. Sturdy plastic may be the best choice for informal or outdoor events.

The salad fork will be at the left or right of the dinner fork depending on when salad is served. Note this in the description if you are using a salad fork.

For family meals, **the dessert fork** is placed at the right of the dinner fork and the **dessert spoon** is placed to the left of the soup/dinner spoon. Another option is to place the dessert flatware horizontally at the top of the dinner plate with fork handle to the left and spoon handle to the right. For “formal” meals, it is correct to bring the dessert flatware to the table when dessert is served after the meal. Note this in your description and place the entire dessert setting to the right of or above the table setting.



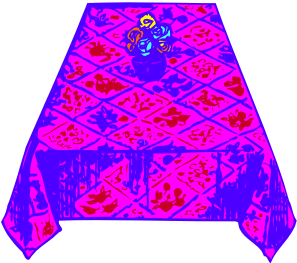
The butter knife, if used, goes across the top of the butter plate with blade parallel to the table edge or it may be placed on the right of the plate parallel to other flatware with blade facing the plate.

A soup spoon may be used alone or at the far right of other spoons.

Coffee and teaspoons can be placed at the right of the knife or they may be placed at the right of the saucer or mug. **Ice teaspoons** follow the same rule. Be sure there is a place to rest wet spoons so they do not have to be placed directly on the tablecloth or placemat.

A good general rule to remember is that flatware should be placed in the order that it is used. When oval or round placemats are used, the flatware is still arranged in a straight line.

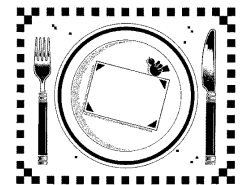
Table coverings can be fabric, plastic, or paper “tablecloths” or placemats. They can be white, patterned or in colors to compliment the occasion and the menu.



- **Napkins** are a useful and decorative part of any place setting. These are usually placed at the left with the opening next to the flatware or they can be placed in the center of the plate or anywhere else that adds color and interest to your setting. (See the item on napkins under “What is a Table Setting?”)
- **Tablecloths** should be of easy-care fabric unless they are disposable. They should be larger than the table (allow 4-10” of overhang for small tables and up to 29” for large tables). Interesting color effects can be achieved by layering cloths.

without placemats. These are 12-15” wide and can add color or pattern to enhance your theme.

- **Placemats** can be used on the bare table or over a tablecloth to define each place setting and provide a foundation for your design.



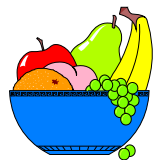
Accessories are like jewelry—they add special touches. Use them to carry out your theme and to gain color and harmony.



- **Napkin rings** were designed to use at family meals; napkins made of washable fabric were replaced after each meal unless they were soiled. Today we use them more for adding color and variety and for carrying out a table theme. They should be functional and easy to handle.

When **candles** are used, these should be lighted with the flame above eye level to prevent glare.

- **Centerpieces** should be low enough so that diners can see and talk to the person across the table. These can be flowers, fruit, vegetables, figurines or other objects, which compliment the setting; they should be attractive from all sides.



- **Salt and peppershakers** should be within reach of those seated. It is not necessary to include these in your table setting unless you want to; in that case, display them above the table setting.

