

AMY VANDERBILT HAS NOTHING ON ME!

Etiquette



Letting other people know who you really are can propose some big challenges. Standards of etiquette exist for many different areas. Some standards remain constant, some change, and some standards emerge from a shift in societal norms or in response to new trends and technology (such as cell phone use or instant messaging). This section presents some common scenarios that require etiquette skills that you may or may not already possess. Use your experience to determine the best etiquette for each situation. Since much of our culture revolves around eating, this section will highlight manners, however many of the suggestions can be applied to other areas. Etiquette in some of these other areas is referenced throughout the section and there are some further readings identified for more information.

ADVENTURES IN POLITE DINING

Congratulations! You have made such a great impression and your professor invites you and a few other students to dinner with a visiting professor. After the initial shock, what comes next? Don't worry, it will be fine! You should be very proud to be included – just bring your best table manners, be willing to try new foods you may encounter, relax, and enjoy yourself!

First, it's considerate to RSVP as soon as possible. Not responding in a timely manner leaves your host unsure of your intentions. All your life you've heard that you should be on time. You've probably already heard it from this professor. Well, the same applies in a social setting. It's good to be on time both in the classroom and in social settings. Arriving late to class only distracts other students who are there to learn, just



like yourself. Besides, frequent tardiness demonstrates to your professor that you don't care enough about his or her class to be on time. You want a good grade, don't you? Being late for social events or to meet friends is also inconsiderate. It only shows them that their time means very little to you. How would you feel if you had to constantly wait for your friends? So please, RSVP for dinner and be on time.

Second, the table manners below will assist you in preparation for that great dinner occasion. Knowing these twenty items will help you make a great impression. The following list does not appear in order of importance or rank. Many come from campus dining services both locally and across America.

So, before showing up to dinner, read on!

- *It's best to order foods that can be eaten with a knife and fork.* Finger foods can be messy and are best left for informal dining.
- *Don't slouch.* You'll look interested if you sit up straight at the table and it makes a good impression.
- *Elbows on the table are acceptable only between courses, not while eating.*
- *Don't season your food before you taste it.* This is an insult to the host and chef.
- *Although it may be possible to talk with a small piece of food in your mouth, never talk with your mouth full.* Your parents taught you never to chew with your mouth open or make loud noises when you eat for a reason.
- *Spoon soup away from you when you take it out of the bowl and sip it from the side of the spoon.* If your soup is too hot to eat, let it sit until it cools rather than blowing on it.
- *It's normal to have food get stuck between your teeth.* When you can't remove it with your tongue, leave the table and go to a mirror where you can remove the food from your teeth in private.
- *Eat rolls or bread by tearing off small bite size pieces and buttering only the piece you are preparing to eat.*
- *Engage in table conversation that is pleasant.* Ask questions of your host or hostess, the guests, and your fellow students. Not only does this ensure that no one at the table will be neglected, but your interest will be appreciated.



- ***You should not leave the table during the meal except in an emergency.*** If you must go to the bathroom or if you suddenly become sick, simply excuse yourself. Later you can apologize to your professor by saying that you didn't feel well.
- ***If you need something that you cannot reach easily, politely ask the person closest to the item to pass it.*** For example, "After you have used them yourself, would you please pass the salt and pepper?"
- ***If a piece of your silverware falls onto the floor, pick it up if you can reach it and let the server know you need a clean one.*** If you cannot reach it, tell the server you dropped a piece of your silverware and ask for a clean one.
- ***If you or someone you are dining with is left-handed, it is best for the left-handed person to sit at the left end of the table or at the head of the table.*** This arrangement helps ensure that everyone has adequate elbowroom to eat comfortably.
- ***If food spills off your plate, you may pick it up with a piece of your silverware and place it on the edge of your plate.***
- ***Use one napkin and make sure it remains on your lap throughout the meal, except when you are using it to wipe your mouth.*** Never wipe your mouth with the back of your hand.
- ***Never spit a piece of bad food or tough gristle into your napkin.*** Remove the food from your mouth using the same utensil it went in with. Place the piece of food on the edge of your plate. If possible, cover it with some other food from your plate.
- ***Do not push your plate away from you when you have finished eating.*** Leave your plate where it is in the place setting. The common way to show that you have finished your meal is to lay your fork and knife diagonally across your plate.
- ***The proper place to reapply lipstick when dining out is in the bathroom rather than the table.***
- ***Keep your cell phone turned off from the moment you walk in to dine until you are out the door and the experience has concluded.***
- ***Always shake hands and look each guest in the eye when being introduced by your professor and prior to leaving.***

Finally, within the week, send a handwritten thank you note to your professor and tell him or her how special you felt to be invited to dinner. The professor will remember that note when you ask for a letter of recommendation for an internship or when calculating your final grade!



GOT ETIQUETTE?

Besides polite dining, below are further suggestions on etiquette. They apply both on campus and beyond. Although cell phone and email usage are recent additions to the etiquette literature, the other tips date back to your great grandparents. Hope some will come in handy for you now and into the future!

Top Five Tips for Etiquette Across Campus

1. **Doors:** You can make others feel great by holding the door open for them when entering buildings and classrooms. No matter their gender or age, making the habit of holding the door makes everyone feel good.
2. **Cell Phones:** Professors have a policy of no cell phones during class, but what about at other times? It is important to ask yourself, is the person calling as important as the person you're sitting next to in the Student Union? Calling the person back later might say volumes about your etiquette skills.
3. **Elevators:** Let others off before you even think of getting into an elevator. When the door opens you could hold it to let them exit and then allow older passengers and those with small children to get on first.
4. **RSVPs:** Invitations that request a response must be replied to with a yes or no. You can have a change of plans but let people know one way or the other. Events and meetings, especially where meals are involved, cost money especially if extra plans need to be handled for no-shows.
5. **Emails:** Email messages should use appropriate business writing techniques rather than IM construction. Always ask, "Would you send this e-mail out in a letter format?" If not, you might want to check your spelling, grammar, subject line, and tone.

Miss Manners has nothing on you either if you follow these tips.

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