



## Table Setting Instructions

### PART I: Planning the table

**Step 1:** Decide how many guests you will be serving.

**Step 2:** If you are inviting a large group, or people who don't know each other, create a seating arrangement.

*Tip 1:* Try to arrange guests logically. For example, you might seat shy guests near those more adept at conversation.

*Tip 2:* The cook is best situated closest to the kitchen.

*Tip 3:* If young children are present, they should be seated beside their parents.

*Tip 4:* Traditionally, a single male guest is seated on the hostess's right, a female guest on the host's right.

**Step 3:** After you've decided on a menu, you'll be able to establish what dishes and utensils you will need.

*Tip 1:* Be sure to provide options for any guests with dietary restrictions.

**Step 4:** Decide if you want to use a tablecloth, placemats or both.

**Step 5:** Decide if you want to include a centerpiece.

*Tip 1:* Give yourself time enough to shop for or make a centerpiece appropriate for your style and the event.

*Tip 2:* Make sure that the centerpiece doesn't obstruct guests' ability to see each other across the table.

*Tip 3:* Get children involved with finding or making the centerpiece.

### PART II: Setting the table

**Step 1:** Place the tablecloth and/or placemats on the table.

*Tip 1:* If the tablecloth is made of a thin material, use a pad to prevent damage from heat or heavy dishes.

*Tip 2:* The middle crease of the tablecloth should run lengthwise down the center of the table.

*Tip 3:* If you are serving a seated meal, the tablecloth should hang over approximately a foot. On a buffet table, it should hang to the floor.

**Step 2:** Position the dinner plates one inch from the edge of the table, unless you plan to warm the plates and serve in the kitchen.

*Tip 1:* For formal meals, use a charger plate at each setting. Also called underplates or chop plates, these plates can be removed once the guest sits, after the salad or soup, or left through the meal.

**Step 3:** Place the knife on the right side of the plate, blade inward, one inch from the edge of the table. Utensils are positioned in order of use, with the outermost items used first (e.g., salad fork and soup spoon, then dinner fork and dinner knife).

*Tip 1:* All utensils should be positioned one inch from the table's edge.

*Tip 2:* For beef or chicken, consider using a steak knife.

*Tip 3:* There should never be more than three of any utensil used in a place setting.

**Step 4:** Set the spoon to the right of the knife.

*Tip 1:* Remember to put out two spoons if you're serving both soup and dessert. The smaller dessert spoon goes to the right of the knife with the soup spoon positioned to its right.

*Tip 2:* You can bring the dessert spoons out just before dessert.

**Step 5:** Place the dinner fork on the left side of the plate, and the salad fork to the left of the dinner fork.

**Step 6:** Fold the napkin and set it to the left of the salad fork.

**Step 7:** Place the salad plate to the left of the napkin.

**Step 8:** Set the water glass two inches above the knife to the right, and to the right of that, the wine glass. Like the utensils, the glasses are placed in order of use (e.g., white wine, red wine, dessert wine and water glass).

*Tip 1:* If you'll be serving coffee or tea, place the cup and saucer to the right of the setting, with a spoon on the right side of the saucer.

**Step 9:** Place a bread plate with a butter knife two inches above the forks.

**Step 10:** Position any condiments on the table where they can be easily reached.

*Tip 1:* Some contend that for a formal dinner serving dishes and utensils are not to be placed on the table.

**Step 11:** With a formal dinner or an unusually large guest list, consider putting place cards before each setting.