



Mess Dinner Etiquette

Table Manners



Mess Dinners are usually very formal, and many rules are put in place in order to keep it this way.

Proper table manners are not just for the mess.

Like the meal at a wedding reception for example, good table manners are extremely important.

For some people, this may be their first experience of formal dining.

- You should sit up straight at the table.
- Your hands should be on your lap when not using table utensils.
- You should never rest your elbows on the table.
- Your napkin should be laid across your lap and not tucked into your shirt or jacket.
- At the end of the meal, the napkin should be placed on the table so that it can be taken away by the servers as the table is cleared.

- When the soup course is served, the soup should be taken from the side of the spoon.
- Never put a knife in your mouth.
- Do not cut bread or rolls. Bread shall be broken with the hands.
- Your fork should be held in the left hand for the meat and may be transferred to the right hand for vegetables.
- After the main course is finished, the knife and fork are placed side by side on the plate to indicate that the plate may be removed.

Which Utensil?

The table will be set according to the meal that is being served.

On the left there will be a separate fork for each course. A full place setting might include a fork for the appetizer, the salad, the fish course, and the meat course.

On the right there will be a dinner knife, possibly a fish knife and a soup spoon.

The number and type of utensils will match the courses. Start at the outside and use the next utensil for the next course.

The utensils set on each side are meant to be used in that hand. It is considered bad manners to transfer a utensil from one hand to the other.

The exception to this rule allows you to use the main dinner fork in your right hand to eat the vegetables. It must be used in the left hand for the meat while using the knife in your right hand.

Do not use your knife in your left hand. And **never** use your knife to push the vegetables onto your fork.

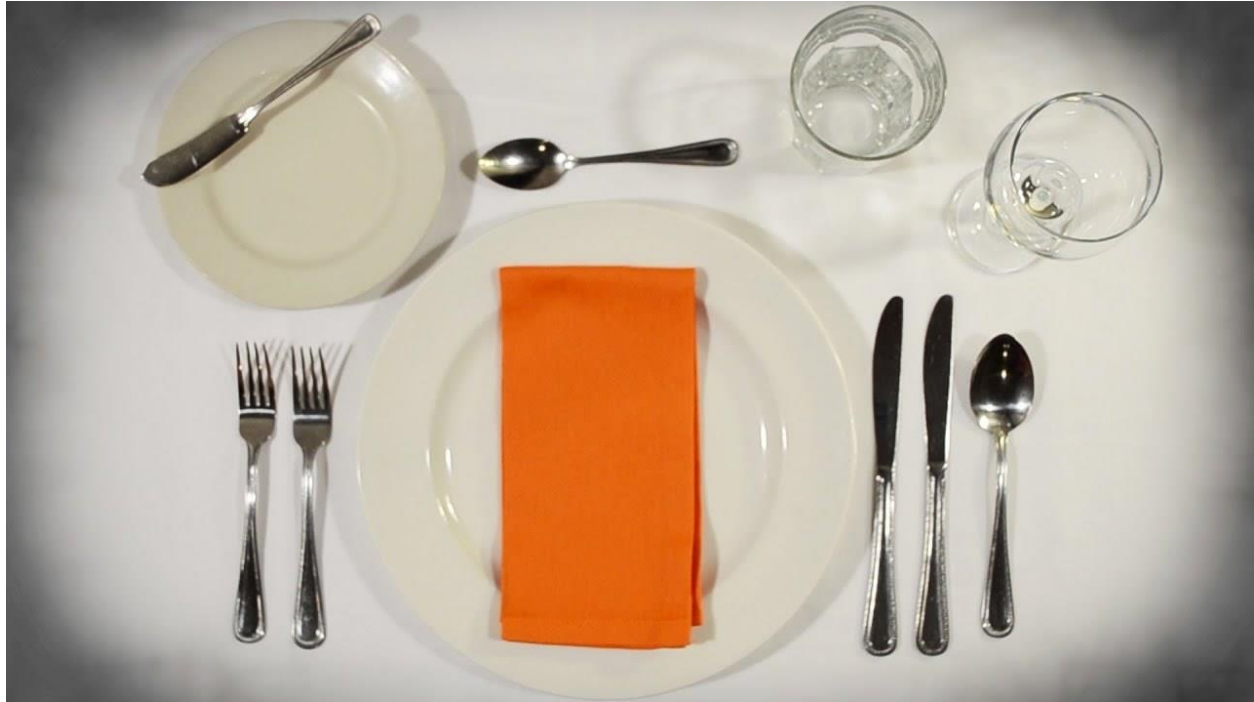
Dessert forks and spoons will be brought to the table with the dessert.

Additional fine points of table manners to be followed are:

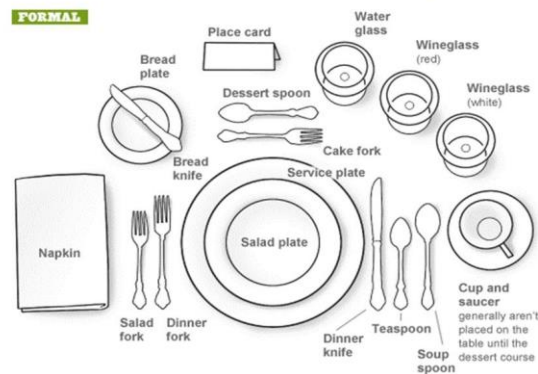
- Tea or coffee cups are not held in the hand for long periods; after a short sip, they are returned to the saucer;
- Tea or coffee cups should always be held by the handle;
- Teaspoons are not used to taste the tea or coffee, but rather to stir the contents; and
- Toothpicks are not used at the table and should only be used in private.

It is important that the unique atmosphere of the Mess Dinner not be disturbed or degraded in any way by immature or offensive behaviour. If background music is to be played, it must be discrete so that it will not interrupt or override conversations.

Table setting



Proper Table Setting



This is what your table setting will look like. Some aspects may vary (such as the number of utensils or glasses), but most of it will remain the same.

It is important to use each utensil for its intended purpose. For example, the salad fork should only be used to eat salad.

Do not shovel your food into your mouth. Do not gulp your water and beverages. As far as which knife or fork to use - start at the outside and work in.

When the first course arrives, it will be served from your left. The plates will be taken from the right. No dish is ever removed until the last diner has finished eating the course being served. If dessert is to be served, dessert plates, knives and forks are also placed on the table.



Confirmation puzzle: [click here](https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=152fd9dabcc9) <https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=152fd9dabcc9>

Confirmation



[Watch this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AnwEpBLCKc) to test your knowledge in table manners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AnwEpBLCKc>

Rules of Order



The Fun Begins

It is a common mess practice to "call out" other diners for lapses in etiquette. This is why the tables are best arranged in rows opposite each other so one side can accuse the other.

If a diner spots an infraction, they may rise and get the attention of the PMC. Once recognized, they raise their objection to the offensive action. The accuser must have permission from the PMC, or they too can be fined.

The accused may then rise and defend or explain their action.

It is up to the PMC to render a decision and punishment. If the decision goes against the accuser, then they must pay the price.

Some of these forms of misconduct can include but are not limited to:

- Passing of notes under the table
- Using a utensil in the wrong hand
- Crossing their legs under the table
- Leaving the mess without permission
- Eating with your elbows on the table
- Caught stealing the PMC's Gavel
- Improper wearing of the uniform
- Being on any electronic device at the table

- Talking when the PMC is talking
- Breaking any By-Law rules

Consequences



There are a variety of disciplinary actions that can be fined in good fun. Here's a list of a few!

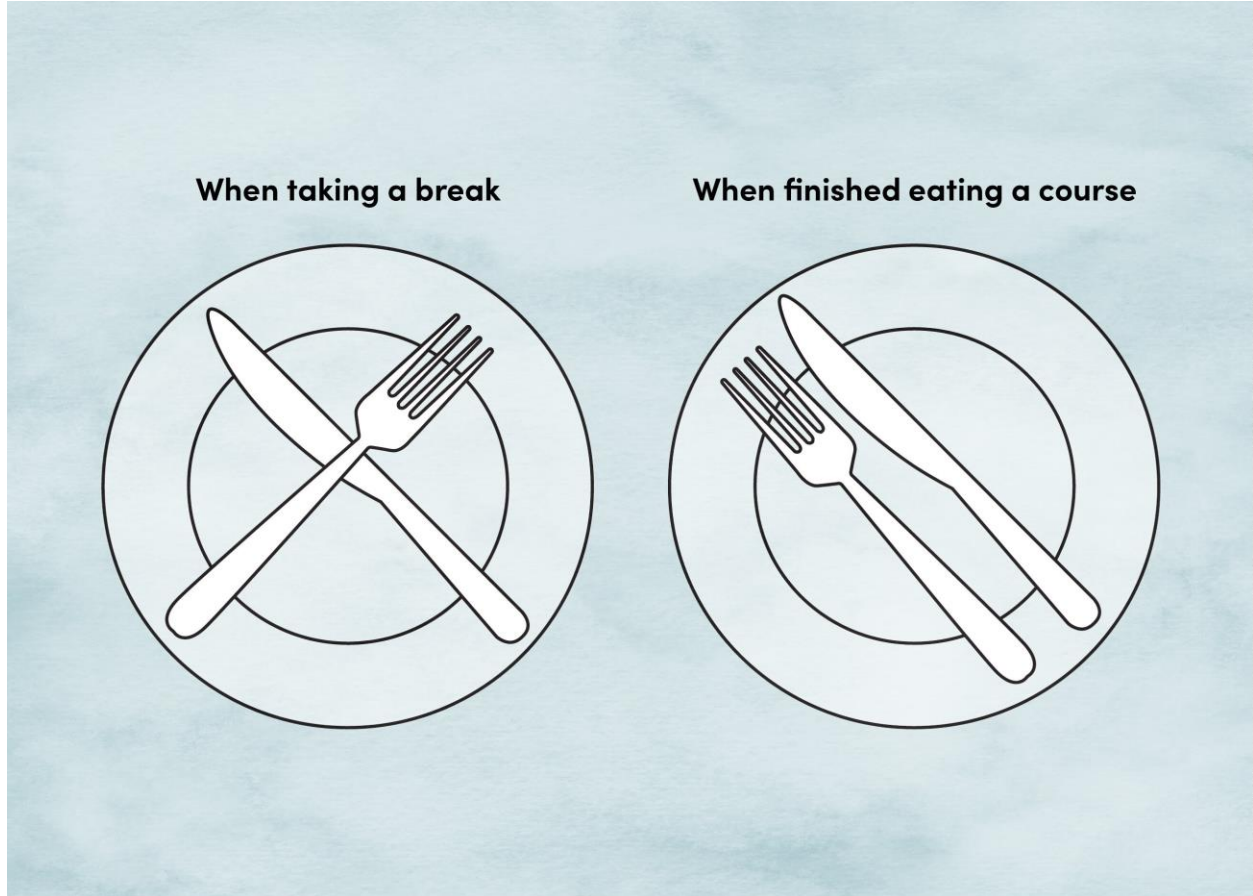
- Singing (often to "I'm a little Teapot", "I want it that way", "Dancing Queen, etc.)
- Rap Battles
- Push up Challenges (Sally up/down)
- Dancing (Waltz)
- Group skits
- Sharing jokes
- Taking someone's chair if they leave the mess without permission

The shenanigans that take place during mess dinners can be quite entertaining, but it is important to keep it fun and light.

Be respectful when suggesting punishments for your peers, especially if you know they could react poorly or do not enjoy being in front of large crowds.

If you are unsure if something is acceptable in the mess setting, ask a senior cadet or officer at your table beforehand.

Final Thoughts



You should only engage in conversation with people who are on your left, right, across or diagonal from you. You should not engage in conversation with people at another table as that is considered bad behaviour and bad manners.

You are expected to converse with the people at your table. Do not look at your cell phone or answer texts. Better yet, turn your cell phone off, not silent. Focus on the people you are dining with.





Confirmation quiz

Which one of these statements is an example of misconduct?

- a. Eating with your elbows on the table
- b. Talking to the person sitting next to you
- c. Taking short sips of tea or coffee
- d. Looking at the guest speaker

The correct answer is

- a. Eating with your elbows on the table

Which one of these statements is an example of proper conduct?

- a. Being on any electronic device at the table
- b. Talking when the PMC is talking
- c. Cutting your bread
- d. Breaking the bread with your hands

The correct answer is

d. Breaking the bread with your hands

True or false; the PMC has the authority to punish a member, no matter their rank or position.

The correct answer is True. The PMC does have the authority to punish a member, no matter their rank or position.

In Conclusion



In conclusion, knowing proper table manners is of the utmost importance for appropriate conduct during the proceedings. Following the rules outlined in this presentation will help you to understand the deep-rooted traditions of mess formal dinners and allow you to fully enjoy your dining experience.