

# Business Luncheon

Before or after you are hired for a job, you may be invited to a business luncheon (formal lunch that is also a business meeting). Reasons for a business luncheon include: to talk to your supervisors about a project; to meet new people who are important to the company; or to talk to a customer about purchasing something from the company. Or, if you are applying for a promotion, the company manager may invite you to a business luncheon to see how you handle yourself during the dining (eating) situation. Your table manners say a lot about your work habits. Showing good restaurant etiquette (manners or rules of social customs) proves that you care enough to learn the correct way to do things, and that you pay attention to details. Employers promote employees who know how to act during meetings and during business luncheons.

How do you learn good business restaurant etiquette? A way to learn is to watch business men and women around you when you are eating in a restaurant. Do they sit straight or slouch in their chairs? Do they leave the napkin on the table, put it on their lap, or tuck it into their shirt under their chin? Do they hold the fork at all times or put it down frequently? Do they bite into a whole dinner roll, cut it in half, or gradually break it into bite-size pieces? Do the men toss their ties over their shoulders to keep them from dipping into the soup or do they wear tie clips to secure their ties? Do the women place leftover dinner rolls in their purses to take home for dinner, ask for a box for leftovers, or leave extra food on the plate?

As you watch business men and women during a meeting in a restaurant, you will see that the rules are different from the rules for eating with your family and friends where the dining is relaxed and casual. To help you be successful at business restaurant meetings, here are a few rules of etiquette to follow:

When meeting another person in a restaurant, wait for them in the lobby unless they have suggested that you wait at a table or counter.

If you are the first one to be seated at a table, wait until everyone has arrived before ordering a beverage.

If you are the guest (not going to pay for the meal), find out the price range the host can afford by asking, “What do you recommend?” Look at the prices of the recommended meals, then order one within that price range. Do not simply order a high-priced meal such as lobster. Also, even if the interviewer has a glass of wine, you should not because it is difficult to answer job-related questions while under the influence of alcohol.

Order only the basics such as salad, main course, and beverage. If your host (the person paying for the meals) suggests an appetizer or dessert, you may order one if it feels right to do so. Do not order foods that are messy to eat!

Also, wait for everyone at the table to be served before beginning to eat.



Try to eat at the same pace as the other person. If the person is a slow eater, slow down your eating. If the person is a faster eater than you, ask a question to slow the person's pace of eating and allow you to catch up. Questions may include "Tell me about the history of this company" or "What are the future goals of the company?"

Place the napkin on your lap as soon as everyone has been seated. When the napkin has been placed in a goblet (glass), it is usually best to wait for the server to present it to you — or follow the cue (action) from what your host does. If the host removes it from the goblet and places it on his or her lap, you should do the same. Also, when you pick up the napkin from the table or goblet to place on your lap, don't shake it out over the table as if you were a magician trying to make a rabbit appear. Simply open the napkin as you place it on your lap. Keep the napkin folded in half with the crease toward you. When the meal is finished, make sure your napkin stays on your lap until everyone at the table has finished eating and drinking. Then, napkins should be placed to the right of your plate. Paper napkins should also be neatly placed to the right of your plate. Never wad a napkin up and then leave the napkin in the center of the plate.

For a formal meal, pick up your eating utensils from the outside in (going towards the plate). If there are more than one fork or knife, and you are not sure of which to use, simply begin by using the utensil on the outside (salad fork and knife) and working your way towards the plate (meal fork and knife).

Do not eat or chew ice from your beverage. When served a glass of iced tea or water with wedge of lemon, cup your hand in front of the lemon as you squeeze it into your glass so that you won't squirt person across from you with lemon juice.

Offer shared food (such as basket of rolls) to others before helping yourself. Pass food to the right. When eating a roll or slice of bread, tear off a bite-sized piece, butter it, lay the knife across the top of the bread plate (with cutting edge toward you), and then eat the piece. Swallow the first piece before breaking off and buttering the second piece. If in doubt about what to do during a meal, watch what the employer is doing for clues to follow about dining manners expected during a business meal.



### **QUICK CHECK:**

1. a) Define "luncheon." b) List 3 reasons why you may be invited to a business luncheon.
2. a) Define "etiquette." b) What 2 things does good restaurant etiquette show about a person?
3. Who do employers promote?
4. Describe a good way to learn good etiquette.
5. Where should you wait when meeting another person in a restaurant?
6. When may you order a beverage?
7. a) How can you find out the price range of food the host can afford? b) Why should you not order alcohol? c) Do not order what?
8. When should you begin to eat?
9. a) What should you do if the other person is a slow eater? b) A faster eater than you? c) Give an example of a question you may ask.
10. a) When should you place the napkin on your lap? b) What do you do if the napkin has been placed in a goblet? c) Describe how you should place your napkin on your lap.
11. a) What happens to the napkin after you finish eating? b) Where should napkins be placed?
12. Describe how to put lemon into your iced tea.
13. Which way should you pass food?
14. Explain the correct way to eat a roll.
15. If in doubt about what to do, what can you do?
16. Why do you think business luncheons require different manners than meals with friends?