

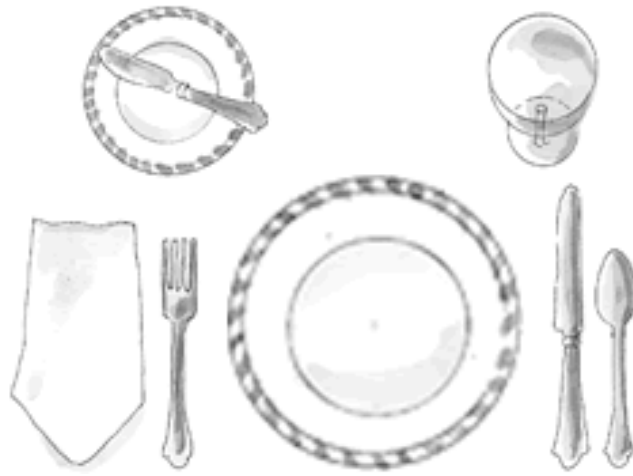
What kind of setting do you want to create?

How to set the table

Setting a table is not as difficult as it seems. The basic rule is: Utensils are placed in the order of use; that is, from the outside in. A second rule, with only a few exceptions, is: Forks go to the left of the plate, and knives and spoons go to the right. And finally, only set the table with utensils you will use. No soup; no soup spoon.

Basic Table Setting:

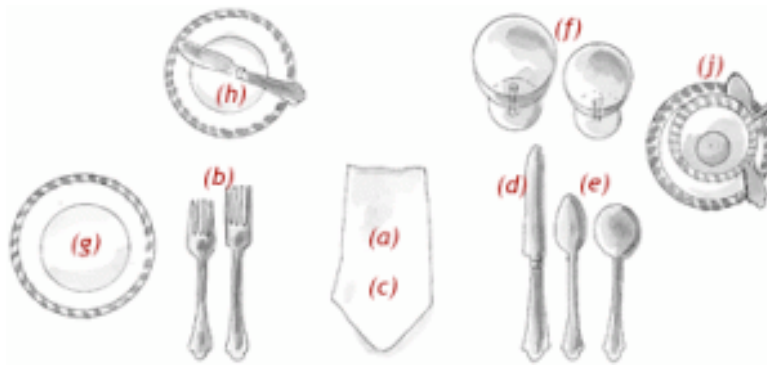
Here are two great tips to help you remember the order of plates and utensils:



1. Picture the word “FORKS.” The order, left to right, is: F for Fork, O for the Plate (the shape!), K for Knives and S for Spoons. (Okay, you have to forget the R, but you get the idea!)
2. Holding your hands in front of you, touch the tips of your thumbs to the tips of your forefingers to make a lowercase ‘b’ with your left hand and a lowercase ‘d’ with your right hand. This reminds you that “bread and butter” go to the left of the place setting and “drinks” go on the right. Some other things to know:
 - Knife blades always face the plate
 - The napkin goes to the left of the fork, or on the plate
 - The bread and butter knife are optional

Informal Table Settings:

When an informal three-course dinner is served, the typical place setting includes these utensils and dishes:



The illustration shows how a table would be set for the following menu:

- Soup course
- Salad or first course
- Entree
- Dessert

(a) Dinner Plate: This is the “hub of the wheel” and is usually the first thing to be set on the table. In the illustration, the dinner plate would be placed where the napkin is, with the napkin on top of the plate.

(b) Two Forks: The forks are placed to the left of the plate. The dinner fork, the larger of the two forks, is used for the main course; the smaller fork is used for a salad or an appetizer. The forks are arranged according to when you need to use them, following an “outside-in” order. If the small fork is needed for an appetizer or a salad served before the main course, then it is placed on the left (outside) of the dinner fork; if the salad is served after the main course, then the small fork is placed to the right (inside) of the dinner fork, next to the plate.

(c) Napkin: The napkin is folded or put in a napkin ring and placed either to the left of the forks or on the center of the dinner plate. Sometimes, a folded napkin is placed under the forks.

(d) Dinner Knife: The dinner knife is set immediately to the right of the plate, cutting edge facing inward. (If the main course is meat, a steak knife can take the place of the dinner knife.) At an informal meal, the dinner knife may be used for all courses, but a dirty knife should never be placed on the table, place mat or tablecloth.

(e) Spoons: Spoons go to the right of the knife. In the illustration, soup is being served first, so the soup spoon goes to the far (outside) right of the dinner knife; the teaspoon or dessert spoon, which will be used last, goes to the left (inside) of the soup spoon, next to the dinner knife.

(f) Glasses: Drinking glasses of any kind — water, wine, juice, iced tea — are placed at the top right of the dinner plate, above the knives and spoons.

Other dishes and utensils are optional, depending on what is being served, but may include:

(g) Salad Plate: This is placed to the left of the forks. If salad is to be eaten with the meal, you can forgo the salad plate and serve it directly on the dinner plate. However, if the entree contains gravy or anything runny, it is better to serve the salad on a separate plate to keep things neater.

(h) Bread Plate with Butter Knife: If used, the bread plate goes above the forks, with the butter knife placed diagonally across the edge of the plate, handle on the right side and blade facing down.

(i) Dessert Spoon and Fork: These can be placed either horizontally above the dinner plate (the spoon on top with its handle facing to the right; the fork below with its handle facing left); or beside the plate. If placed beside the plate, the fork goes on the left side, closest to the plate (because it will be the last fork used) and the spoon goes on the right side of the plate, to the right of the dinner knife and to the left of the soup spoon.

(j) Coffee Cup and Saucer: The illustration shows a table setting that would be common in a restaurant serving a large number of people at once, with coffee being served during the meal. The coffee cup and saucer are placed above and to the right of the knife and spoons. At home, most people serve coffee after the meal. In that case the cups and saucers are brought to the table and placed above and to the right of the knives and spoons.

Formal Table Settings:

The formal place setting is used at home for a meal of more than three courses, such as a dinner party or a holiday meal. It's simply the informal place setting taken to the next level, adding glassware, dishes and utensils for the foods and beverages served with the additional courses.

Everything on your table should be crisp and sparkling. White linens are still considered the most formal, but colored or patterned tablecloths or place mats, and napkins can be just as elegant. Other possible elements include candles, a centerpiece or multiple flower arrangements, and place cards. Place mats (if used) are entered in front of each chair, about one to two inches from the edge of the table. A tablecloth is spread to hang evenly on each end and on the sides. The average drop is 12 to 18 inches, but don't worry if it is a little long or short—you just don't want it hanging too low, or it will end up in the diners' laps.

The most formal table is strictly symmetrical: centerpiece in the exact center, an even number of candlesticks, place settings spaced evenly around the table, silverware lined up and at the same distance from the edge of the table. The space not taken up by place settings is your available real estate. Feel free to vary flower arrangements and decorations as you like, creating a balanced and pleasing table scape. Be careful not to overcrowd the table, and arrange your decorations so diners seated opposite can see each other.

In General:

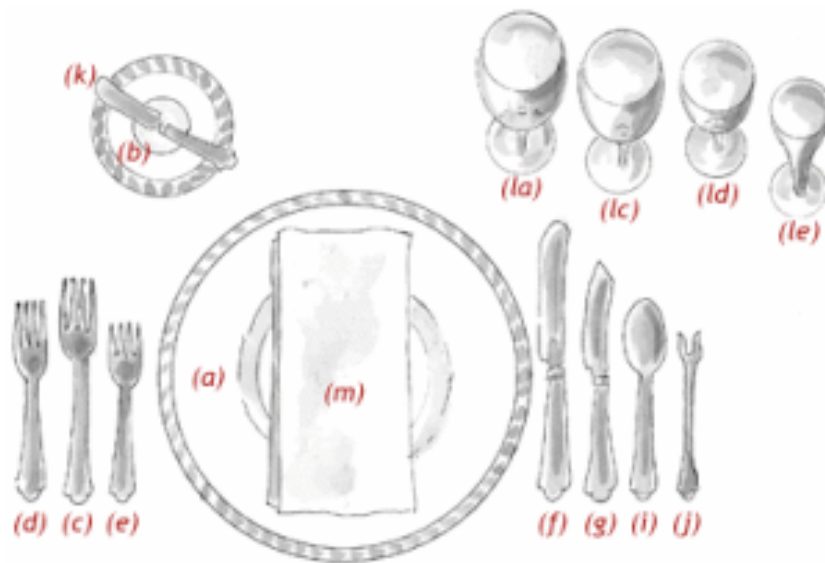
- Knife blades are always placed with the cutting edge toward the plate.
- No more than three of any implement are ever placed on the table, except when an oyster fork is used in addition to three other forks. If more than three courses are served before

dessert, then the utensils for the fourth course are brought in with the food; likewise the salad fork and knife may be brought in when the salad course is served.

- Dessert spoons and forks are brought in on the dessert plate just before dessert is served.

The placement of utensils is guided by the menu, the idea being that you use utensils in an “outside in” order. For the illustrated place setting here, the order of the menu is:

- Appetizer: Shellfish
- First Course: Soup or fruit
- Fish Course
- Entrée
- Salad



(a) Service Plate: This large plate, also called a charger, serves as an underplate for the plate holding the first course, which will be brought to the table. When the first course is cleared, the service plate remains in place for any other courses, such as a soup course, until the plate holding the entrée is served, at which point the two plates are exchanged. The charger may serve as the underplate for several courses which precede the entrée.

(b) Butter Plate: The small butter plate is placed above the forks at the left of the place setting.

(c) Dinner Fork: The largest of the forks, also called the place fork, is placed on the left of the plate. Other smaller forks for other courses are arranged to the left or right of the dinner fork, according to when they will be used.

(d) Fish Fork: If there is a fish course, this small fork is placed to the left of the dinner fork because it is the first fork used.

(e) Salad Fork: If the salad is served after the entrée, the small salad fork is placed to the right of the dinner fork, next to the plate. If the salad is to be served first, and fish second, then the forks would be arranged (left to right): salad fork, fish fork, dinner fork.

(f) Dinner Knife: The large dinner knife is placed to the right of the dinner plate.

(g) Fish Knife: The specially shaped fish knife goes to the right of the dinner knife.

(h) Salad Knife (*Note: there is no salad knife in the illustration*): If used, according to the above menu, it would be placed to the left of the dinner knife, next to the dinner plate. If the salad is to be served first, and fish second, then the knives would be arranged (left to right): dinner knife, fish knife, salad knife.

(i) Soup Spoon or Fruit Spoon: If soup or fruit is served as a first course, then the accompanying spoon goes to the right of the knives.

(j) Oyster Fork: If shellfish are to be served, the oyster fork goes to the right of the spoons. *Note: It is the **only** fork ever placed on the right of the plate.*

(k) Butter Knife: The small spreader is placed diagonally on top of the butter plate, handle on the right and blade down.

(l) Glasses: These are placed on the right, above the knives and spoons. They can number up to five and are placed in the order they will be used. When there are more than three glasses, they can be arranged with smaller glasses in front. The water goblet (*la*) is placed directly above the knives. Just to the right are placed a red (*lc*) or white (*ld*) wine glass. A sherry glass or champagne flute (*le*), to accompany a first course or for an opening toast, go to the right of the wine glasses. Glasses used for a particular course are removed at the end of the course.

(m) Napkin: The napkin is placed on top of the charger (if one is used) or in the space for the plate. It can also go to the left of the forks, or under the forks if space is tight.