

# Table Setting Contest Guidelines

Do you know that you can be a designer each time you set the table? A designer chooses and arranges things according to a plan for beauty and order. An neat, interesting, clean and attractive table setting makes any meal more enjoyable.

Actually, there is more than one way to set a table. The usual way to set a table is to put all the dishes, flatware, and food on the table before anyone sits down. When there is company or for a special meal, part of the food and dishes may be left in the kitchen and served later. Diners at a buffet or a picnic may fill their plates and glasses before they are seated. The way to set your table depends upon the way the meal is to be served. Be creative and have fun.

## SELECT A THEME

What is the occasion...a family dinner, a holiday, or lunch with friends? Select a theme that fits the occasion. Possibilities can run from a fishing party sack lunch to a formal Mother's Day dinner.

## TABLE APPOINTMENTS

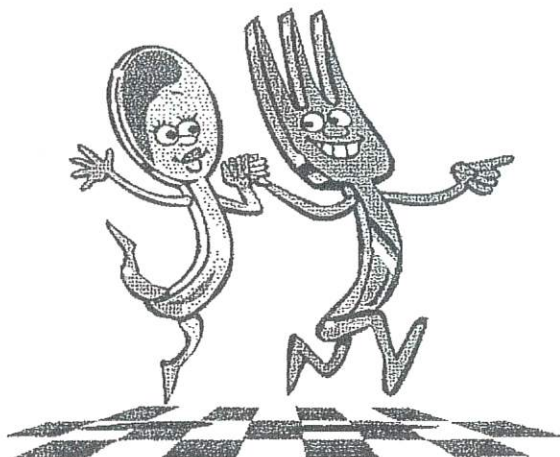
Table appointments include any item used to set a table: tablecloth, placemats, dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and centerpiece. Choose table appointments to fit the occasion and carry out the theme. Paper plates, plasticware, and paper napkins may be used for a picnic but they would not be appropriate for a formal dinner.

## THE TABLE COVER

The table covering is the background for the food and table appointments placed on it. It protects the table and makes for less noise. Placemats or tablecloths may be used. Sometimes the table is left bare.

Choose a cover that is **appropriate** for the occasion and the other table appointments. You may match or blend colors and textures in the dishes or use something quite different for contrast.

- One place setting is to be displayed. Include table covering, dinnerware, stemware, flatware, centerpiece and menu. Serving dishes are not allowed.
- Color texture, design and creativity are important.



## THE PLACE SETTING

Allow at least 20 inches for each person's dishes. This is called a *cover* and each cover is set exactly the same. A cover contains the dinnerware and flatware for the meal served. Do not include serving dishes.

- ① Put the plate, china, pottery paper, glass, etc., in the center of the cover about one inch from the edge of the table. If a table is not used at the event, placement may vary.
- ② Place the knives and spoons on the right side, the forks (silver, plastic, etc.) on the left about one inch from the plate and one inch from the edge of the table. Turn the cutting edge of the knife towards the plate. If there is more than one piece in each cover, such as one dinner fork and a salad fork or one teaspoon and a soup spoon, place the one that will be used first outside the other.
- ③ Napkins folded into oblongs are placed next to the forks. The fold of the oblong should be to the left so it opens like book. Decorative and creative folds are encouraged. Placement of the napkin may vary.

④ The first beverage glass is placed about one inch above the tip of the knife. If serving more than one beverage, place additional glass(es) to the right of first glass in order served.

⑤ If coffee or tea is served, the cup is placed on the saucer and set to the right of the spoon one inch from the edge of the table. Have the handle pointing to the right.

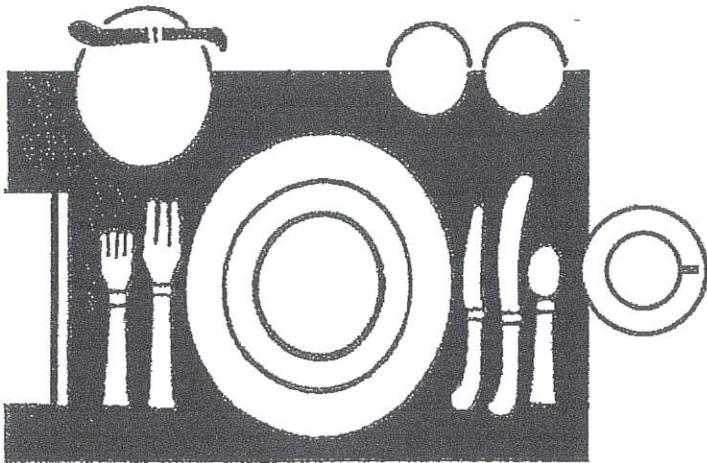
⑥ Salad and dessert bowls may be placed left of the forks and napkin or at the top of the fork.

⑦ When selecting your cover, include a dish for each course. Placement may vary according to how and when food is served. Do not include serving dishes.

⑧ Flatware and dishware must be safe to eat from i.e., no glitter, glue, etc. is to be used on eating surfaces.

⑨ Do not prepare food.

⑩ NOTE: University of Nebraska and Lancaster Event Center are not responsible for any damages.



## THE CENTERPIECE

The centerpiece should be coordinated with the table appointment and be appropriate for the occasion. If a centerpiece is used, it should not obstruct anyone's view. Centerpiece candles are NOT to be lit. Points will be deducted for lit candles.

## MENU

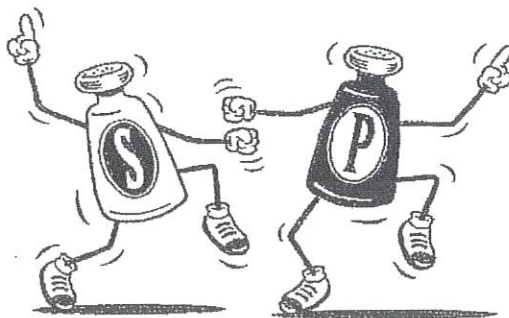
When planning a menu, first decide on the main dish. Select appropriate vegetables, appetizer, soup or salad. Add a bread, dessert and beverage, if desired. Use the Food Guide Pyramid to plan nutritious meals. Breakfast, party, and picnic menus should contain two or three food groups. Other meals should contain at least five food groups from the Food Guide Pyramid.

Participants are encouraged to develop interesting and creative menus. For example, you might name a food to fit your theme, you should be able to describe the ingredients and preparation required all menu items, as well as proper food storage.

NOTE: The use of alcoholic beverages in any menu will disqualify table setting.

## ATTIRE

Participant's attire should correspond with the theme/occasion of their table setting.



# GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE MENU

The menu should be on a 4X6 or larger on medium of your choice (index card, ceramic tile, chalkboard, etc.) printed or typed by the participant. Prop may be used for menu.

- 1 List the foods in the order in which they are served. (Every menu will not include all the foods listed.)

Examples for a formal meal:

Appetizer  
Main Dish  
Starchy Vegetable  
Other Vegetables  
Salad  
Bread  
Dessert  
Beverage

Broiled Ham  
Grilled Pineapple Slices  
Cole Slaw  
Hot Gingerbread with Applesauce  
Coffee Milk

- Group foods served in one course. Use a single space between each course and a double space between courses.

Cream of Broccoli Soup  
Curried Toast Fingers  
Fresh Fruit Salad Plate  
with Lime Sherbet  
Crescent Rolls  
Glazed Chocolate Roll  
Coffee Milk

- 2 Use CAPITALS at the beginning of all words except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

- 3 When an item on the menu has an accompaniment:

- (a) place the main item to the left and the accompaniment to the right,

Braised Pork Chops Applesauce

- (b) or you may center the main item and write the accompanying item underneath,

Braised Pork Chops  
Applesauce

- (c) if more than one accompaniment appears, place one at each side on the same line,

Sesame Seed Wafers Tomato Bouillon Saltines

- (d) or place both on the same line below.

Tomato Bouillon  
Sesame Seed Wafers Saltines

- ④ When a food is commonly prepared in more than one way, avoid confusion by describing the method of cooking, such as: **Roast Turkey** or **French Fried Potatoes**.
- ⑤ List each food with the exception of butter, cream, sugar, or salad dressing, unless it is something special, such as **Honey Butter** or **Poppyseed Dressing**.
- ⑥ List beverages last.
- ⑦ Plan the spacing and arrangement of the items on the menu so that the written menu is symmetrical.

## COMMON ERRORS IN PLANNING MEALS

### FLAVOR

All bland flavors  
 Too many strong flavors  
 Repetition of food or flavor  
 No tart or acid-flavor  
 Too many sweet or too many sour foods

### COLOR

Too many foods of same color  
 No contrast or variation  
 Clashing or unpleasant color scheme

### SIZE

Too many mixtures  
 Too many small pieces of the same size and shape  
 Too many similar shapes  
 Lack of variety in shape

### NUTRITION

Too many foods from one food group  
 Missing food groups  
 Contain a variety of foods not meeting the nutritional needs of those for whom it is planned.

### TEXTURE

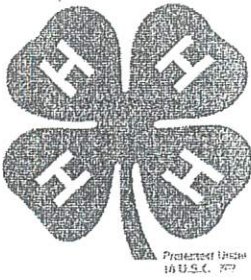
Too many soft foods  
 Too many chewy foods  
 Too many crispy or crunchy foods  
 Lack of variety in texture

### PREPARATION AND TYPE OF FOOD

Too many foods prepared in the same way, such as fried foods, creamed food, or foods with sauces  
 No main dish  
 More than one main dish  
 Too many starchy foods  
 Same fruit or vegetable more than once  
 Too many high protein foods

### TEMPERATURE

Too many foods of the same temperature  
 Not enough time allotted for preparation  
 Not proper storage for safety  
 Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold



# Table Talk!

**Appointments** Any item used to set a table. This includes tablecloth, placemats, dinnerware, glassware, flatware, serving dishes, and the centerpiece.

**Condiments** Salt, pepper, cream, sugar, ketchup, steak sauce, relishes, or pickles.

**Dinnerware** Includes plates, cups, saucers, and bowls.

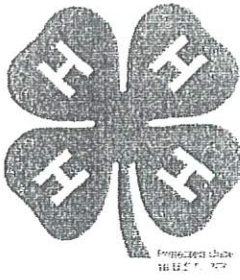
**Flatware** Refers to knives, forks, and spoons.

**Glassware** Includes glasses of all shapes and styles.

**Family Style** The dishes, flatware and food are placed on the table. The head of the family either dishes food and full plates passed to each family member or the food is passed around the table for everyone to serve himself or herself.

**Formal Style** Formal style differs only in that the food is placed on the plates and brought to the seated guests.

**Buffet Style** The buffet style of service is informal. Each person is given a plate and allowed to serve themselves from a table of food. They can either eat with their plates on their lap or sit at a table that has dinnerware and flatware.



# Planning a Menu

## Five Basic Factors for Planning Menus:

### Flavor

Mild, strong, bitter, sweet, salty, and sour.

-Use one distinct flavor with different flavors in additional dishes to enhance the distinct flavor.

-A meal is most satisfying when all taste sensations are perceived.

### Texture

Soft, chewy, moist, dry, and crisp.

-Use texture in a meal to add character and interest.

### Color

-A variety of colors in a dish makes the meal more appetizing.

-Avoid colors that clash.

-Consider the color of the napkins, plates, etc.

### Size or Shape

Sliced, diced, strips, and mashed.

-A meal made with different sizes and shapes is more interesting.

-Leave some foods whole and others cut.

### Temperature

Hot, cold, and room temperature.

-Serve hot foods piping hot

-Serve cold foods well chilled





## Favorite Food Review

### Checklist:

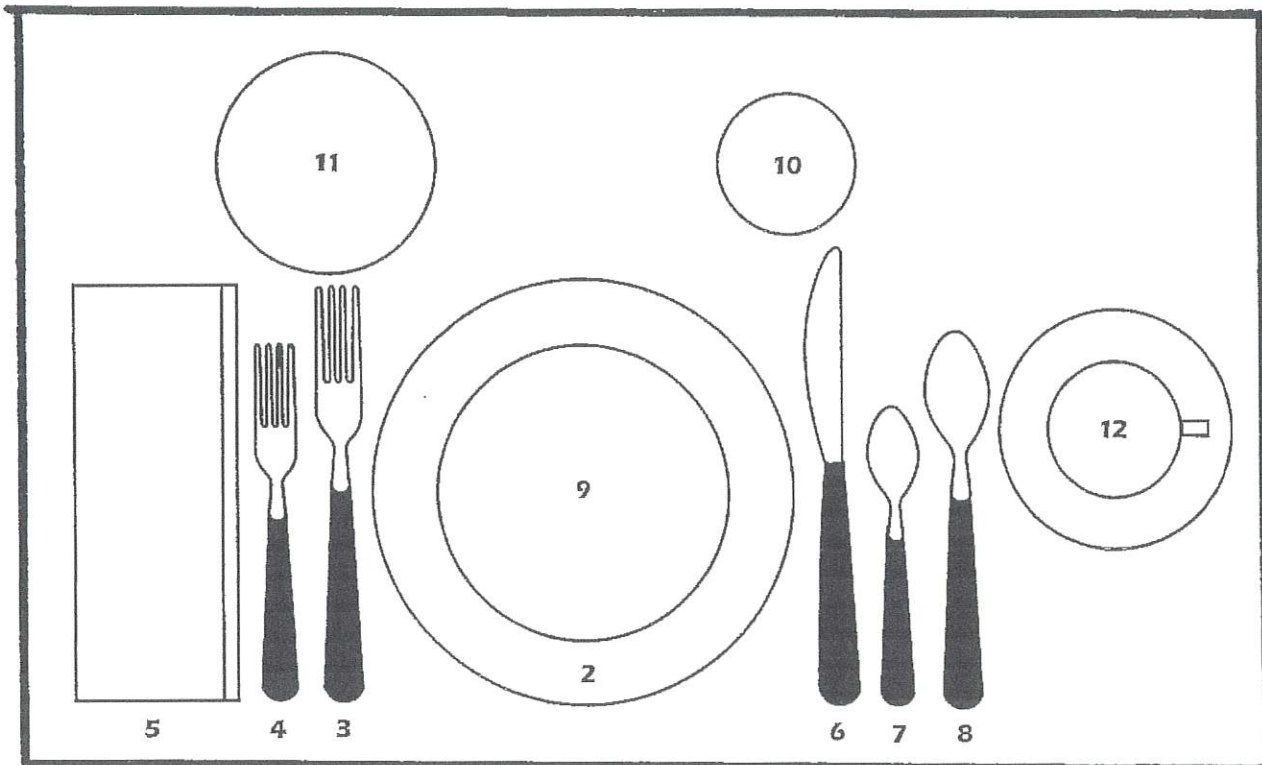
- Think of a Creative theme for your table
- Use a card table
- Tablecloth
- Centerpiece
- Placemat
- Proper dinner, flat, & glassware
- Full menu
- Recipe of one menu item
- One serving of the menu item you chose
- Knowledge of food preparation, and My Pyramid food guide





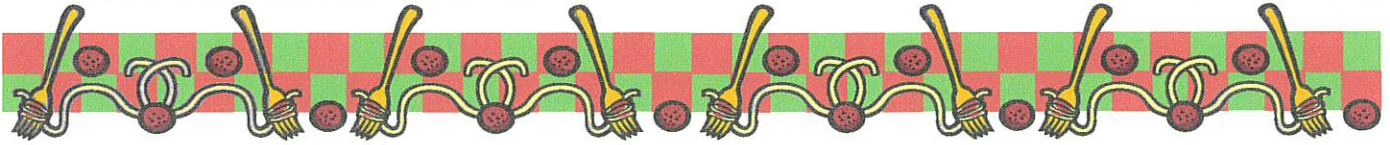
# Basic Table Setting Guide

1. The silverware, plate and napkin should be one inch from the edge of the table.
2. The plate is always in the center of the place setting.
3. The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate.
4. If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.
5. The napkin goes to the left of the fork and is placed with the fold on the left.
6. The knife goes to the right of the plate with the blade facing the plate.
7. The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.
8. If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.
9. The soup bowl may be placed on the dinner plate.
10. The glass is placed at the tip of the knife.
11. If a salad or bread plate is used, place it at the left, just above the tip of the fork.
12. The cup or mug is placed to the right of the spoons, up from the table edge.





# HINTS FOR WRITING PERFECT MENU



Careful menu planning helps contribute to healthy eating choices, efficient time management and allows us to be better consumers while grocery shopping.

## Tabletop Tips:

- Write out the menu and meal preparation schedule before beginning. What do you have to do ahead or at the last minute? What do you have to do ahead or at the last minute? It may be helpful to write the time needed to prepare and cook. Then decide what time you plan to serve your food. From these two times, you can determine what time you need to begin cooking.
- Keep in mind the time you have available. Know when you need a quick meal or when you can plan something special.
- Make the meals as full of variety as possible. Choosing foods Variety is the key to an appealing meal. Create interesting contrasts with various colors, textures, flavors, and shapes of food.
- Plan to serve only a few, good quality foods that are simple and made well.
- Prepare as many foods beforehand as you can.
- Choose foods that save as much last-minute preparation as possible.
- Use equipment efficiently. If you already have the oven turned on use the oven for two dishes.
- Remember to keep and serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

After prepared your menu, you need to put some thought into how you will present your meal. You can make any meal special by adding color to the table by choosing a tablecloth, placemats and perhaps a simple centerpiece.

## To set the table:

- A plate is centered in front of each chair.
- The fork is place to the left of the plate.
- The knife is to the right of the plate with the blade edge pointing towards the plate.
- The spoon is to the right of the knife.
- A beverage glass is set at the tip of the knife.
- The napkin may be place on the plate, or under or to the left of the fork.

Menu planning skills are necessary in providing healthy and appealing meals for your families and when entertaining for special occasions. Some counties have a table setting contests or favorite food contests, that require you to write a menu.

## To write the menu:

- List the foods in the order in which they are served. You do not have to list every item served (salt, pepper, etc.).
- Capitalize main food items. Consider word placement – usually centered.
- Group foods served in one course together - use single line spacing between food items and a double spacing between courses.
- When a food is commonly prepared in more than one way, avoid confusion describe how it will be prepared

(Center words)

*Appetizer*  
*Main Dish*  
*Starchy Vegetable*  
*Other Vegetables*  
*Salad*  
*Bread*  
*Dessert*  
*Beverage*