

Academy of Young Diplomats

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Ambassador Urszula Gacek

Diplomatic Receptions



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What elements, activities must you consider when planning a reception?



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Invitations

What should be written on them?



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Give the exact address of the event.

Give the exact date and time.

In the case of cocktails, or a stand-up event a beginning and end time should be indicated.

For a formal dinner – only the start time is given.

Indication as to dress code (informal, business attire, black tie, white tie)



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Indicate what kind of reply you expect.

RSVP - Répondez s'il vous plait – a reply is expected (and obligatory on the recipient). You should give a contact telephone number/e-mail.

Regrets only – you only expect a reply in the case of non-attendance (for larger, less formal events).



Invitations

Should be sent out in good time.

Printed on card, generally 110 x 155 mm to 135 x 190 mm.

A pdf invitation, sent via e-mail, is becoming increasingly acceptable, but a printed, posted invitation is still the most elegant.

The name of the person invited should be hand written, especially for a formal, sit-down dinner.

For a large, informal, stand-up gathering, it is not necessary to include the recipient's name.

It should be clear whether we are inviting spouse/partner.

Make it clear what someone is being invited to.





Embassy of
Poland



*On the occasion of the National Constitution Day
the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland
Jan Stanisław Bury and Mrs Paula Bury
request the pleasure of your esteemed company
at a Reception
on Thursday, May 3, 2018, from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm*

*Residence
Diplomatic Quarter, Riyadh
Business attire / National dress / Uniform*

Please present the invitation at the entrance

*Regret
e-mail: riyadh@msc.g...*



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How to seat guests at the table

**Business lunch (with interpreters)
Formal dinner**



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At table

Seating plans

Two basic types of seating plan – French and English

French Style

The host and hostess (or co-host) are seated opposite each other mid-way along a long dinner table

G9	G5	G1	Host	G3	G7	G11
G12	G8	G4	Co-host	G2	G6	G10



French style is the best arrangement for a business or working lunch. The most important people are seated close to each other, with more "junior" participants seated at the ends of the table. Gender plays no role in this seating arrangement.

Proposed seating plan when receiving a delegation – business/working lunch

D2	Host	D3
H3	Head of Guest Delegation	H2



Working lunch

Menu planning – avoid fiddly food

How to balance the work with the lunch

Possible scenarios

Special guests



English style

More appropriate for private or social dinners

F2	M4	F6	M5	F3	M1
Host					Hostess
F1	M3	F5	M6	F4	M2



What factors, other than protocol, would you want to take into consideration when arranging a seating plan for a sit down dinner?



When taking into account whom to seat where, precedence is important, especially for seating the most important guests, with the place of honour being reserved at the right hand or the host or hostess (we naturally turn to the right if we are right-handed), but other important factors must be taken into consideration.

Animosities between invited guests

Languages spoken

Shared interests

Gender has traditionally played a role in this seating arrangement, but is becoming less important with changing social mores.

The rule is never to seat husband and wife or partners next to each other!

Social distancing – Covid-19

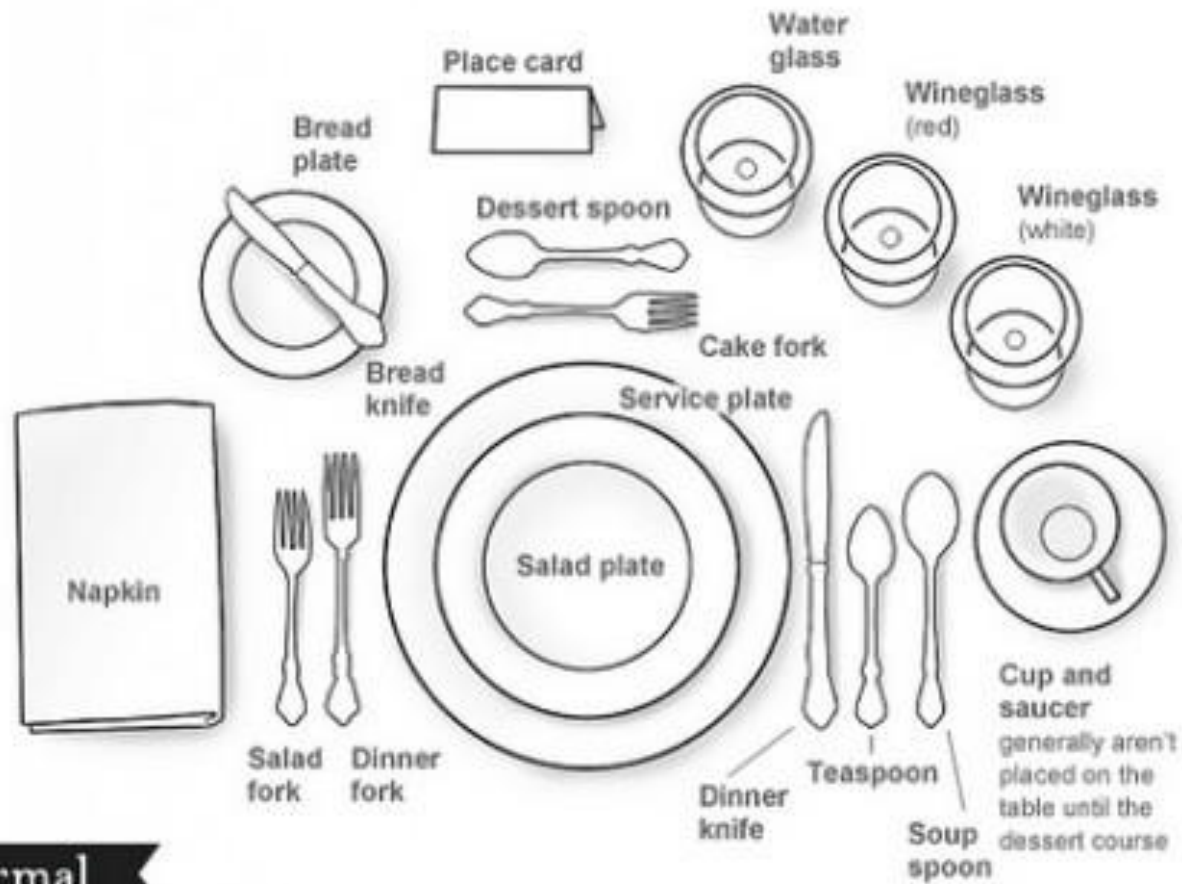


How to set a table



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formal



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At table (cont.)

Most guides to savoir vivre or etiquette will take you through the basics of how to behave at the dining table.

These basics are much more than knowing which cutlery to use, how to tackle tricky food (some examples in a moment), which glass to pour your water into, and which way to pass the port decanter at a formal British dinner.

Where do you put your napkin?

What to do with left-handed guests?

How to signal to the servers/waiters?





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Grapes

Do not pick individual grapes from a bunch. Use either the fingers, or grape scissors, to remove a small bunch.





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Lemons

A wedge of lemon usually accompanies fish or seafood.

Squeeze the lemon against the tines of a fork, which channel the juice.

Keep the lemon wedge low over the plate, cupping a hand around it while squeezing to avoid spraying neighbours.

If serving segments of lemon make sure to remove all visible pips.

Wedges are best but, if used, half-lemons may be served wrapped in muslin and squeezed with the fingers (without using the fork).

Lemons to be used in tea or drinks should be pre-cut into small rounds and possibly then in half again and served on a side plate.



Pips and Stones

Pips and stones should be discreetly spat into a cupped left hand and deposited on the side of the plate or discarded.

Do not fiddle or play with plum or cherry stones.





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Prawns

If the prawn arrives intact, begin by removing the head and tail; do this by giving each end a sharp tug.

Peel off the shell, starting from the underside, where the legs meet the body.

Finally, remove the black thread from along the back before eating the flesh.

To eat a prawn served headless but with its tail attached, use the latter as a handle and discard after eating the flesh.

Use the finger bowl as before.





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Bread

Bread rolls are eaten from a side plate to the left of a place setting.

Break the roll, by hand, into bite-sized pieces that are eaten individually.

Break off a new piece for each mouthful, rather than dividing the roll into chunks in advance.

Butter, if desired, is taken from the butter dish, using the butter knife and placed on the edge of your side plate. Each piece, or mouthful, is individually buttered.

The same applies to the artisan sliced bread often found in restaurants and to melba toast.





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Cheese

Always use the cheese knife provided to cut cheese the board, not your own knife.

Round cheese, such as Camembert, must be treated like a cake: cut triangular portions.

It is correct to slice a whole large cheddar or Stilton horizontally but, if already cut like a cake, follow suit.

With a wedge such as Brie, cut slivers lengthways.

Never cut the nose off a triangular wedge. Stilton is usually sliced, but if a spoon is provided, scoop a portion of cheese from the middle.

Bite-sized morsels of cheese on individual pieces of biscuit should be brought to the mouth, rather than biting off mouthfuls from a large piece of cheese on an entire cracker.

It is fine to use fingers to eat hard, non-messy cheese with no biscuits or bread, perhaps with celery or grapes. Cut it into small pieces first.



A few more hints and tips

As the host

Allergies and other restrictions (kosher, halal)
System for summoning waiting staff

As the guest

When you get something you hate to eat
When you find something unexpected in your salad
When you drop food on the floor
When you drop a fork on the floor
When you knock over a wine glass



When you finish eating your soup, leave the spoon in the bowl.

To show you have finished eating your main course your knife and fork should be placed alongside each other, at an angle.

Wait for your host to give the signal to rise from the table.



Challenges of a stand-up buffet

As host

What food to serve?

How to serve it Covid-19 challenges

What to do with VIP guests?

When can you eat?

As a guest

When to start eating?

Standing in line

Last Supper Syndrome



**Typical dress code for receptions,
Black Tie, Cocktail/Evening, Business**



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Black Tie

After 20.00 hrs

Men

Black dinner Jacket

Evening shirt with plated front

Black bow tie



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Women

Dressy two-piece, short cocktail dress, long evening dress

If a long evening dress is worn with gloves, these should be short if worn with a long-sleeved dress and long if worn with a short sleeve or sleeveless dress. Gloves are not taken off for greeting or dancing.



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Cocktail or Evening Attire (most typical for evening reception/dinner)

18-00 – 20.00 hrs

Men – Dark suit, white shirt

Women – Cocktail dress (short), two-piece (in a lighter fabric, more intense colour or with a bolder cut than for day wear)

Dinner jackets are NEVER worn before 20.00 hrs

Business Attire (early evening, straight from work)

Men – Suit and tie

Women – Skirt, trousers or dress with jacket



Small talk

Engaging people in easy conversation on interesting, non-controversial subjects

The conversation should be light, entertaining, but definitely not boring

With strangers try to find a “common denominator”, a place you may have both visited, an interest shared

Make an effort to draw shy and quiet people into the conversation

It is as much about being a listener as being a talker

Introductions can make the small talk flow more easily

If you are the host, introduce people to one another, but add something personal to help start the flow. If you are given such a valuable piece of information, grab it!



Some basic ground rules and hints

Avoid controversial subjects, esp. politics, religion, ethically controversial issues

Do not gossip

Poor taste jokes (sexist, racist) are an absolutely off limits

Be well informed, not just in your field, HINT – listen to BBC Radio 4 podcasts, TED talks

