



GRADUATE PROGRAMS

OSU Center for Health Sciences

Etiquette in the Dinner Interview

The dinner interview is usually the second or third step in the interviewing process. If you have made it this far, then congratulations, you are that much closer to landing the job. Typically, the dinner will be at a restaurant that may be fancier than one is used to. Do you know which fork to use first? Which direction to pass food? Where the napkin goes when you leave the table? If not, these seemingly minor incidents can cost you the interview.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Why are dinner interviews important?

Dinner interviews allow the employer to see you in a more relaxed setting. The employer gets to see how you interact in a social setting and give the employer a better feel for you as a person and a potential employee.

What should I order?

Sometimes the menu will be pre-planned so you don't have to worry about what to order. But most of the time the choice of food is up to you. Typically go for food that is easy to eat and not messy. Stay away from pasta and barbecue. The dinner is more about the interview than the act of eating.

Which fork do I use?

Start on the outside and work your way in. The outermost fork, on the left side, is your salad fork, then your dinner fork, and on the right the outermost utensil is your soup spoon followed by your dinner knife. The butter knife is located on your bread plate. Typically, the dessert fork and spoon are located to the top of the plate by the dessert plate.

Which water glass is mine?

Excellent question, the water glass is the glass to your right. And your bread plate is the plate to your left. Now an easy way to remember what is yours and what isn't is BMW. Bread-Meal-Water. Going from right to left that is the order of your items on the table.

What if somebody takes my water glass?

Typically, if somebody takes your glass it starts a chain where everyone takes a glass correspondingly. If this happens it's no big deal and the employer isn't likely to notice.

But every now and then it doesn't work out so perfectly. Just politely mention to the waiter that you don't have a water glass, but do not make a fuss. The dinner is not about eating; it is about the interview.



Is it appropriate to order alcohol?

If you are at a lunch interview, alcohol is off limits. If it happens to be a dinner interview, a single glass of wine may be permitted, but is discouraged. (You are there for an interview not to go out with friends.) Remember that you are there for business and should conduct yourself as such.

What do I do with my napkin when I sit down?

First, you sit down then gently unfold the napkin and place it in your lap. If it is a large dinner napkin you do not need to unfold it all the way. Avoid flinging the napkin open with a great flourish. Simply open it discreetly and place it in your lap.

Where do I put the napkin when I leave the table?

Some rules of etiquette say to leave it in your chair to signify that you are coming back; however, most other rules discourage this. Simply lay the napkin next to your plate when you have to leave. It shouldn't be perfectly folded but it also shouldn't be thrown down.

How big of a bite should I take at a time?

Take small bites, and never cut your food more than two bites in advance. Dinner is a slow process to get to know those around you, so do not rush through your food either. You neither want to be the first one finished nor the last.

How do I cut my food?

Believe it or not there is a correct way to cut your food. First and foremost, do NOT saw your food in half. The food should be cut with no more than one slice across it with the dinner knife. If a sharper knife is needed (such as a steak knife), politely ask the server for one.

When cutting your food, cut with the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left.

American Style

After cutting, place the knife on the plate and switch the fork to the right hand and then eat.

Vs.

Continental (European) Style

Keep the knife in your right hand and fork in the left. And simply bring the fork up to eat.

Do everyday manners still apply?

Yes, they still apply. Do not talk with your mouth full, chew with your mouth open, or place your elbows on the table. Use "please" and "thank you" when asking for and receiving something.

Which direction do I pass the food?

Always pass from left to the right. If the bread basket is in front of you then it is your responsibility to pass it. You first offer it to the person on your left then you take yours and pass it to the right.

When someone asks for salt or pepper you always pass them as one unit. Salt and pepper travel together. Also, never handle someone else's food. Pass them the service plate and not the food directly.

Now, when the basket or bowl is on a plate and you pass it, you pass by picking up the plate that it rests on

