Job interviews and meetings may be conducted over a meal so it is important to be familiar with proper dining etiquette. Use this guide to learn the basics of each style of dining and other tips to avoid mistakes at your next meal. Bon Appétit!

FORMAL DINING SETTING
The photo below is similar to what you can expect your table setting to look like. Some differences may be the number of glasses, smaller fish or seafood forks, or the original placement of the napkin. When seated, the table setting may appear crowded. Remember BMW – bread on the left, meal in the middle, and water to the right – to avoid using your neighbor's bread plate or water. When using your utensils, start on the outside and work your way in as the meal progresses.

DINING STYLES
There are two proper dining styles. Continental style is more efficient and widely used, however it is important to have a basic understanding of both styles and being consistent in whichever style you choose.

American Style:
1. Hold utensils similar to how you would hold a pencil, in between your thumb and middle finger, using your index finger to control movement.
2. Hold your knife in right hand, fork in left. Use fork, tines down, to control food while cutting one to two pieces at a time.
3. After cutting food, lay knife across the top edge of plate with blades facing inward.
4. Switch fork to right hand and bring to mouth with tines of fork facing upward.
5. Switch fork back to left and pick up knife to cut next piece. Repeat.
Continental Style:
1. Hold utensils similar to how you would hold a pencil, in between your thumb and middle finger, using your index finger to control movement.
2. Hold your knife in right hand, fork in left. Use fork, tines down, to control food while cutting one to two pieces at a time.
3. Leave knife in hand, with the side of your wrists resting against the edge of the table so your hands do not touch the table.
4. If necessary, use your knife to push food, such as peas or other side dishes, onto your fork.
5. Bring food to mouth with the tines of the fork facing downward unless food, such as peas, requires them up.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I...
• Order food?
  □ Ask for suggestions from the host. Avoid finger food or something difficult to eat. Avoid trying anything new. Order in the mid-price range on the menu.
• Order a beverage?
  □ When interviewing, politely decline if alcohol is offered and stick with iced tea or water. At other business dinners, it would be appropriate to follow the host’s lead if they order, but limit yourself to one if you choose to drink.
• Use my napkin?
  □ Place your napkin across your lap at the beginning of the meal. Use only to blot your mouth.
  □ If you are coming back to the table, place your napkin on the seat of your chair.
  □ When you are finished eating, place your napkin to the left of your plate. You do not need to refold the napkin.
• Butter my bread?
  □ Break off one small piece at a time over your plate. Butter and eat.
• Get up from the table?
  □ Excuse yourself politely. Enter and exit from the right of your chair.
• Am ready to eat?
  □ Wait until everyone has been served. Follow your host’s lead to determine the style of eating you will use.
• Am asked to pass the pepper?
  □ Pass to the right, never across the table. Always pass the salt and pepper together.
• Season my food?
  □ Taste it first, even if you know you like pepper on the dish.

PLATED DINNERS
If you know that the meal will be a plated dinner or lunch, let your host know of any dietary restrictions ahead of time. You may or may not like what is on the menu, but you should only send back a meal if the food is prepared in a way that may make you ill (the meat is undercooked, etc.) Do so politely and discreetly. Remember, the people you are dining with are more important than your meal. If you are not enjoying your meal, focus on the conversation at the table.

You can request a Career & Leadership Development Center staff member to facilitate proper dining etiquette at your next organization dinner by visiting the Career & Leadership Development Center website.
Click on the Workshops tab to submit an Outreach request.