



Interview Dining Etiquette

by Adam C. Mayer, MA

Career Counselor, Montclair State University
Monster Contributing Writer

Summary

- Some interviews may include going out to eat.
- Proper etiquette is required before, during and after the meal.
- Relax and be yourself.

No matter where an interview takes place, it is still an interview. If a potential employer decides to interview you over a meal at a restaurant, your table manners must be up to par. The following etiquette guidelines will help get you through your next dinner interview.

Before the Meal

Long before you enter the restaurant, make sure you turn off your cell phone or beeper. The candidate who receives a call during the meal doesn't receive a call after the meal.

Before the meal arrives, be sure to actively listen to the interviewer. Paraphrase the content of what an interviewer is saying. Be sure to

stay away from sensitive subjects such as religion and politics. Look for and seize any opportunity to sell yourself.

During the Meal

Eighty percent of communication is expressed through body language. Although you may be nervous, do your best to relax. Maintain an assured posture throughout the meal and, yes, elbows off the table.

More Tips

- Bring all foods to your mouth, not the other way around.
- Never talk with your mouth full.
- Under no circumstances should you smoke or order alcohol.
- Enjoy yourself.

Chances are good that more than one person will interview you. If this is the case, wait until everyone is comfortably seated at the table, and then place your napkin in your lap. If your napkin happens to fall to the floor, ask the server for a new one.

Browse the menu for harmless foods such as moderately priced chicken or fish. Stay away from spaghetti, peas, expensive items and anything that

sounds colossal. When ordering, be courteous to the wait staff. Throughout the meal, be sure to say "please" and "thank you." Your polite attitude will foster an overall positive impression.

After the Meal

Indicate that you are finished with your meal by placing the knife and fork, on your plate, at 4 o'clock. Be sure to place the napkin on the right-hand side of your table setting.

You were invited to the meal so you are not obligated to pay the bill. To offer payment would be inappropriate. Whoever invited you will pay the bill. Be sure to thank the interviewers and obtain their business cards.

What would you do after a face-to-face, phone or impromptu interview? Send a thank-you letter, of course. This situation is no different, so send one as soon as possible.

Dining 101

Knowing the basics of table setup is essential and your key to comfort. You are free to drink from glasses on your right. Your bread plate is on the left. The old silverware maxim holds true: Start on the outside and work your way in.

When eating a roll or bread, make sure to break it into bite-size pieces. If your beverage is served in a stemmed glass, pick it up by the stem.

Once everyone's meal is served, begin eating slowly and with care. Hold your silverware with consideration. Placing a used utensil on the table is considered unsanitary and poor manners. Situate soiled utensils on the side of your plate. Keep the elbows close to your body while cutting food.

Only reach for items that are in front of you. Politely ask others to pass items out of reasonable reach. When passing items, be sure to offer to your left. Keep in mind, however, if a passing pattern has already developed, go with the flow.

Eat your entire meal if possible. It may seem disrespectful if you leave a large amount of food behind, and this isn't the time to request a doggy bag.

Talk about this article and get expert advice on the [Career Planning for College Students message board](#).

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help](#) | [Available Schools](#)
[Privacy Commitment](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Monster](#) | [My Monster](#) | [Monster Store](#)

