

Table Setting Guidelines

What goes into a table setting?

Your job is to decorate and set the table as you would if you were hosting an event of some kind, whether for a birthday, anniversary, just for fun, or any event you can think of. The sky is truly the limit with how creative you can be for this challenge!

Do I need to be enrolled in a specific project to participate?

No! This challenge is open to any Wyoming 4-H member, age 8-18. You **do not** have to be in any certain project to participate. Each participant is only allowed **one** table setting entry.

What will be provided for me?

You will be provided with a plain table, about the size of a card table.

What do I need to bring?

Bring everything you would need to set a table for **one** person:

- Tablecloth
- Dishes
- Cutlery
- Glasses
- Napkin
- Centerpiece/Table Decorations
- Menu
- Invitation (optional, but strongly recommended)
- Placemat (optional)
- Ruler (to measure your tablecloth overhang and make sure your setting is exactly one inch from the edge of the table)
- Clean cloth (to keep dishes, cutlery, and glassware free of fingerprints or dust from traveling)

You **do not** need to wear an apron or prepare any food for this contest.

How do I choose a theme for my table setting?

Sometimes, this can be the hardest part. Choose something you're familiar with and that you like. For example, if baseball is your thing, make a table setting with a baseball theme, with paper plates and napkins and plastic silverware, and a ball and glove for your centerpiece. If your event is more formal, then use a fancy tablecloth, your mom's best china and silverware, a

small, elegant centerpiece with tall taper candles. Either way, make sure that all parts of your table setting match your theme! Here are some theme ideas:

Chickens	Sweet 16	Hearts	Easter	Christmas	Hanukkah
Kwanzaa	Halloween	Fall	Spring	Snowflakes	Snowmen
Clowns	Cowboy/Western		Country	Cows	Casino
Golf	Roses	Polka Dots	Stars	Beach	Tea Time

What color scheme should I choose?

Color is an important part of our world. Table setting is no exception. Color can bring a table to life! There are some colors that go together better than others. To choose colors that are harmonious with each other and look good together, let's look at the color wheel:



Color Wheel

Primary colors (red, blue, and yellow) always look nice together. Complementary colors are directly across from each other on the color wheel, and typically go well together. Deep, vivid tones make dramatic backgrounds; china, silver, and glassware will stand out sharply. A color scheme can include different shades of the same color, or be complementary colors. Use your own judgment and creativity to determine which color scheme is best for your table setting. Certain colors suggest different moods. Red, yellow, or orange and intense, bright colors suggest informality and gaiety. Blue and green tend to be more subdued, more dignified. Pastels seem feminine and delicate. Neutrals are cool and dignified. Natural and earthy colors are homey, casual, and informal. Choose a color that makes a pleasant background for the food you will serve as well as the china.

Tell me some more about the different parts of a table setting.

Tablecloth—Either homemade or bought is fine to use. Make sure that your tablecloth can cover the standard size of a card table—30-36 inches long and 30-36 inches wide. Be prepared for the largest possible card table. Round tablecloths are not recommended. When setting your table, make sure only 12 inches of material hangs down from the edge of the table. Use a ruler to measure in the front. Make sure your tablecloth is properly laundered, clean, and ironed (if

cloth) before the contest. On the table, the tablecloth should hang straight, flat, and smooth, with no bumps across the table. The tablecloth provides the backdrop for your entire table setting.

Some more information on table linens:

The term linen describes any type of table cover. Table linens may be linen, cotton, straw, wood fiber, plastic, paper, jute, or synthetic fibers. Background materials coordinate with the other elements of the table and suggest a mood. The finesse and natural sheen of linen damask makes it a pleasant background for fine bone china, delicate crystal, and highly polished silverware. Lace, hand-embroidered linen, organdy, and smooth finish cotton all suggest lightness and delicacy. Fabrics with coarse textures, cotton with novelty weaves, grass, raffia, and jute have a feeling of depth. They are suitable companions for sturdier china, pottery, or earthenware; short-stemmed, heavier glassware; and heavy silverware. Plastics and paper are real time-savers. However, don't let them lead you into careless habits. Choose them just as carefully as you would more expensive materials. Good design, color, and texture in these materials are becoming more readily available. You can find colors and designs to fit most occasions. Pattern in the background helps build character and influences other choices in table decor. You may use more than one pattern, but this takes care and skill. A great deal of patterns can be overpowering. The beauty of the patterns may be lost in the confusion. The general guideline is use one plain element on the table. If you are limited in the choice of china, silverware, and glassware, set the mood with the table cover. You can have a variety of table covers at less cost than several sets of china, glassware, and silverware.

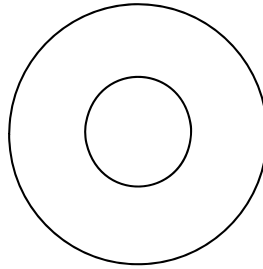
Some information on dishes, glassware, and cutlery (also called table service):

Plain with plain is a safe combination. But, this can make a table too monotonous. If china, glass, and silver are plain, bring in color and pattern with the table cover and decorative accessories. If china, silver, and glassware are highly patterned, establish unity with a plain background and keep table accessories to a minimum. Silver, china, and glassware that are elaborately decorated, not boldly decorated, suggest formality. Thin china and glassware usually suggest formality. Symmetrical and delicate designs, soft, subdued, or rich (but not vivid) colors are considered formal. Use service sets that match each other. Heavy pottery overpowers delicate glassware and dainty silver. Avoid mixing bold and dainty designs. A bold pattern in china or glassware dominates dainty silverware. China describes all dishes: bone china, earthenware, ceramic, plastic, or glass.

Dishes—How formal your occasion is should determine what type of dishes you use. If your occasion is more informal and casual, paper or plastic plates are fine. But you wouldn't serve prime rib steak at your grandparents' anniversary party on paper plates. Make sure you bring dishes that correspond with your menu. If you have a dinner roll with butter on your menu, make sure to use a bread plate. If you serve soup on the menu, make sure you have a soup bowl. Each course should have its own dish. Regardless of quality or design, dishes should be spotless and free of fingerprints. Here's an explanation of each dish you can bring:

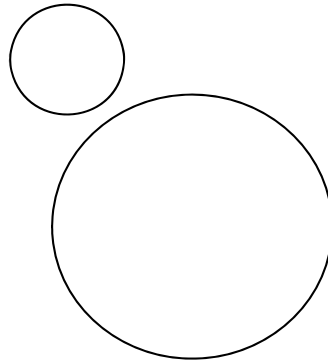
- **Dinner Plate**—This should be the largest plate on the table, placed right in the center. It should be placed exactly one inch (use your ruler!) from the edge of the table.

- Appetizer Plate—If you wish to serve appetizers, have a small, saucer-sized plate for the course. It should be centered on top of the dinner plate.



Appetizer plate centered in the middle of the dinner plate

- Salad Plate—Can also be placed in the middle of the dinner plate, or directly above the dinner plate, if no dessert is being served. Do not serve both appetizers and a salad.
- Soup Bowl—If your menu includes soup, provide a soup bowl. It should be placed in the center of the dinner plate, as shown above. If you have a salad plate, and soup bowl, the soup should be served first, with the soup bowl resting on the salad plate. Make sure your menu reflects this order of the dinner courses.
- Bread Plate—If you choose to serve a dinner roll, make sure to provide a bread plate. It should be placed to the upper left side of the dinner plate, as shown below.



- Fruit Bowl—If your menu offers fruit to your guests, the fruit bowl should sit in the same place as the bread plate, or it can set in the middle of the dinner plate. If your menu has both fruit and bread, the fruit bowl can sit to the far left of your place setting, next to the forks, or in the center of the dinner plate. Make sure the bowl sits no farther than inch from the edge of the table.
- Dessert Plate—If you are planning to serve dessert, make sure your table setting has a dessert plate. It should be placed directly above the dinner plate, with room left in between the two plates for a dessert fork and coffee spoon, if you plan to serve coffee with dessert.

Cutlery--The number and placement of silverware depends on the type of foods being served during each course. A more formal event will have more forks and spoons than an informal event. Make sure all silverware patterns match for a cohesive look in your table setting. All

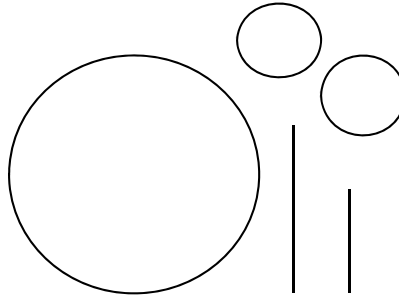
cutlery should be placed exactly one inch from the edge of the table. Cutlery should be close, but not touching. All cutlery should be spotless and free of fingerprints. Only set the silverware that is needed for the menu you have planned. If you do not have anything to cut, do not set a knife.

Here's an explanation of silverware that can be used:

- **Dinner Fork**—Large, heavy fork used during the main course of the meal. Should be placed closest to the dinner plate.
- **Salad Fork**—Smaller, more dainty fork used only during the salad course. If salad is not served, do not include a salad fork. Should be placed directly to the left of the dinner fork.
- **Dessert Fork**—Small fork that looks similar to a salad fork. Should be placed directly in between the dinner and dessert plates. Depending on the type of dessert served, a dessert spoon can be used instead of a dessert fork. Dessert spoons are placed in the same location as a dessert fork.
- **Dinner Knife**—Large, heavy knife used during the main course of the meal. Should be placed directly to the right of the dinner plate, with the edge used for cutting facing the dinner plate.
- **Steak Knife**—If your menu offers steak to your guests, a steak knife should be provided as well. It should be placed next to the dinner knife, with the serrated edge (the edge used for cutting) facing the dinner knife and dinner plate.
- **Butter Knife**—This should be used only for formal occasions, and is preferred to be used rather than a dinner knife. If using a butter knife in your place setting, it should lay across the bread plate.
- **Teaspoon**—Although not always used during meals, should always be included in your table setting. Can be used as a coffee spoon.
- **Soup Spoon**—If your menu offers soup, a soup spoon should be included. Soup spoons are a bit larger than a teaspoon, and sometimes are more round on the end. The soup spoon should be placed directly to the right of the teaspoon.
- **Iced Tea Spoon**—Typically the same size as a teaspoon, only with a long handle. Used for stirring sugar into tea. Should be placed to the right of the teaspoon.

Glassware--Any type of glass that holds a beverage. Depending on your occasion, you may have plastic cups, a regular water glass only, or crystal stemware. Make sure that your glassware corresponds with your menu. All glassware should be spotless and free of fingerprints. Cups with handles should have the handles turned parallel to the edge of the table. If no glass is used, the cup goes to the right of the tip of the knife and slightly above the spoon. Here's an explanation of each glass you can bring:

- **Water Glass**—Most menus include water as a beverage choice for guests. It should be placed to the upper right side of the dinner plate, directly above the knife. If your menu offers tea, milk, or another beverage that would be served in a glass the same size, make sure you have two glasses. A second glass sets to the lower right of the first glass, right above the spoon.



- **Stemware**—Goblets, wine glasses, and other similar glasses should be placed where the second beverage glass would go. If you have more than two beverages, they should be arranged to form a triangle above the silverware.
- **Coffee Mug**—If coffee is being served, the coffee mug should sit on a saucer to the right of the spoon, not turned upside down on its saucer. A spoon to stir the coffee should be placed either next to the dessert fork, if coffee is being served with dessert, or to the right of the regular spoon, if coffee is being served with the meal.

Napkins--Can add a special, creative flair to your table, or they can be more subtle. Paper napkins should only be used for casual occasions. Any semi-formal or formal occasion should have cloth napkins. Cloth napkins come in several sizes, each size tailored to a specific use. A luncheon napkin is smaller than a dinner napkin. The theory is that the more food and drink that is served, the more potential there is for spillage, so the bigger the napkin must be to catch it. Cloth napkins may be purchased in a rainbow of colors and a variety of fabrics, imprinted with custom designs and monograms, and can even come with matching tablecloths and napkin rings. However, a high-thread-count, white, linen or linen-cotton mix damask napkin is still considered the zenith of elegance. Cutlery can be tucked into napkins if you wish. Napkin rings are also optional.

Napkins can be placed on the table in several positions. If an unassuming napkin fold is used, the napkin can be placed to the left of the forks, exactly an inch from the edge of the table. If you wish to draw more attention to your napkin and how it's folded, it can be placed in the center of the dinner plate, or on the dessert plate. If you don't have a dessert plate, the napkin can be placed where the dessert place would have been.

A napkin folded in a unique way is a simple way to jazz up any place setting. The art of napkin folding takes time, patience, and practice to learn, but is a skill that is fun to use. Visit

<http://www.napkinfoldingguide.com/> to find detailed instructions on how to fold napkins into various forms. Here are some examples of some fun napkin folds:



The Pyramid



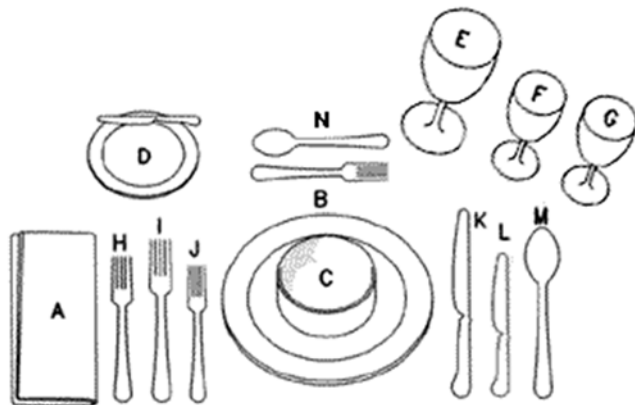
The Bird of Paradise



The Crown

Some tips on napkin folding:

- Make sure the napkin is clean and free of stains.
- Before folding, practice a few times with another cloth napkin.
- Starch and iron your napkin before folding so it has no fold lines and is smooth.
- As each fold is made, if possible, iron it into place.
- Gently place the napkin where you wish it to set in your place setting.



Proper place setting

A	B	C	D	E
Napkin	Dinner plate	Soup bowl on plate	Bread & butter plate with butter knife	Water glass
F	G	H	I	J
White wine	Red wine	Fish fork	Dinner Fork	Salad fork
K	L	M	N	
Dinner knife	Fish knife	Soup spoon	Dessert spoon and cake fork	

Centerpieces--Can add a touch of class to any table setting. The more creative the centerpiece, the better. It should tie in with your theme. However, the centerpiece should not detract from

the real purpose of why your guests are there—to socialize. With that in mind, all centerpieces should be no taller than 12 inches, to encourage visiting among guests. Centerpieces don't always have to be in the center of the table, either. They can be placed on either side of the table, slanted at an attractive angle. Short candles are always acceptable at semi-formal and formal occasions, and taper candles should be no taller than eye level when lit. **Note:** If candles are part of your table setting, **do not** light them! Points will be deducted if your candles are lit.

Other decorations, such as beads or confetti, can be used as well, but don't go overboard. A little goes a long way when it comes to decorating a table. Don't add the little decorations until all of the dishes, cutlery, glassware, and napkin have been set on the table. And make sure no confetti gets on any surface that a guest would eat off of. Choose and arrange table decorations with great care. Restraint and harmony are primary considerations. Table decorations should complement the table setting and food. An over-decorated table is undesirable. Flowers, fruits, and candles are the most common table decorations, although other items in character with the mood can add interest. Natural flowers and fruits lend more grace to a table than imitation ones. However, good quality silk flowers are acceptable. Harmonize colors with the color scheme of the table settings and other items. Floral containers, candleholders, bowls, and plates can be wood, metal, glass, china, raffia, jute, straw, etc. The container should match the flowers, candles, fruits or vegetables, and the china, glassware, and silver. The table decorations should not dominate.

Menus--If you've read this far, you can tell that the menu is a very important part of your table setting, and determines which dishes, cutlery, and glassware you need to use in the setting. The key to putting together a pleasing menu is variety—of colors, textures, and food groups. Keep in mind the Food Guide Pyramid when planning your menu. **Note:** Including an alcoholic beverage as part of your menu will result in immediate disqualification. The meal should be a carnival of the senses, with many different ways to please the palate. You shouldn't serve too many soft, chewy, or crispy foods, and each food group should be represented. Make sure the menu has your name, hometown, age, and club name listed on it. The menu should be placed in a corner of the table on either side of the centerpiece.

Menus should be written in a certain order:

- Appetizer or Soup
- Main Dish
- Starchy Vegetable
- Other Vegetables
- Salad
- Bread
- Dessert
- Beverages

Here are some examples of menus:

A Sunshiny Breakfast	
Menu	
Orange Juice	Hot Chocolate
Cereal with Milk	English Muffin
Fresh Berries	

Grandmothers' Luncheon	
Menu	
Cheeseburger on Bun	
Salad Greens	Potato Chips
Melon	
Iced Tea	

Valentine's Day Dinner	
Menu	
Green Salad with Dressing	
Grilled Chicken and Wild Rice	
Steamed Vegetables	
Rolls with Butter	
Cheesecake with Berries	

Here are some tips on writing menus:

- The finished menu should be typed and printed on an 8.5 x 11 inch piece of paper and put in a glass frame.
- The menu's border and background should tie into the theme without detracting from the menu itself.
- The menu should be neat, centered, and properly organized in the order that the courses will be served.
- The name of your event should be listed at the top, and each food should be capitalized.
- Extra words, such as "with" or "on", should be uncapitalized.
- Beverages can be listed either first or last, but no in between unless the beverage is only being served for one course.

- List all foods being served in each course on the same line.
- Correct spelling is important!
- If another dish as served as an accompaniment to your main course, it should be on the same line as the main dish or you can center the main dish and list the accompaniment beneath it.

Invitations--Including an invitation to your occasion is a nice touch to add to the entire table setting. Your invitation should reflect your theme, and should include the following:

- Name of the event
- Purpose of event
- When it's going to be held (date and time)
- Location
- Who to RSVP to and RSVP deadline
- Phone number of RSVP person
- Any items guests should bring with them (gifts or cards for a birthday or anniversary party, etc.)

Here's an example of an invitation:

Hola! You've been invited to a fiesta to celebrate Marco's 15th birthday! The fiesta will start at 5:00 PM on Saturday, February 6, 2010, at Marco's house, 123 Elm Street, Riverton. Please RSVP to Angela at 307-555-4567 by February 4, 2010. Bring your sombrero and be ready to have fun!

Optional Items

Placemats--Can add a nice touch to an undecorated place setting, and should follow the color scheme of the event. Cloth placemats are acceptable for any occasion, but plastic or placemats made from other materials should only be used for casual celebrations. If a placemat is being used, dishes, cutlery, and the napkin should lie in a straight line 1/2 inch from the bottom edge of placemat. Placemats are not considered an easy substitute for a tablecloth. Choose them with care to form the background for the table setting.

Napkin Rings—Can add an elegant flair to your napkin, if the napkin isn't already folded in a particular style.

Table Setting Judging

Practice setting your table at home. At the contest, contestants will be responsible for setting tables **on their own** by the time the contest begins; parents will not be allowed in the table area during set-up or judging. When the contest starts, you should be standing next to your table

setting and prepared to introduce yourself to the judge, present your table, explain your ideas, and answer questions from the judges such as:

- Why did you choose to host this event?
- Where did you get the idea for this theme?
- Why did you choose these colors? Think about the color wheel!
- Tell me why you chose the foods in your menu. Be sure to include nutrition information!
- Where did your tablecloth come from? How did you choose it?
- Where did you get your centerpiece? Did you make it? How?
- Why do you have these dishes?
- What type of fork, spoon, or knife is this? What is it used for?
- How did you fold your napkin? What is the name of the folding technique?

You will be judged on the following:

- Correct placement of items on table
- Harmonious colors in your theme
- Done to scale
- Relationship of accessories and items
- Harmonious textures
- Imagination/Creativity
- Relationship of table setting to the menu
- Relationship of table setting to the occasion

Remember, the more thoroughly and articulately you explain yourself to the judge, the better score you will get!

Your Appearance

As in any contest, you should be dressed appropriately. However, since this contest is creative, wear something that either goes along with your theme or like you would wear to the event you're hosting. You should still be clean and neatly groomed, and of course, armed with a smile!

Examples

If you would like to see what you can expect at the contest, check out the following links:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YKwP3NkwIk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckr1af-npsw

References:

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Napkin Folds. Accessed on January 26, 2010, at: <http://www.napkinfoldingguide.com/>

Price, C. Dinner is Served: An Etiquette Guide. Pages 5,6,7,8, 14. Washington State University Extension.

Proper Table Settings. Accessed on January 28, 2010, at:

<http://didyouknow.org/info/tablesettings.htm>.

Be aware that due to the dynamic nature of the World Wide Web, Internet sources may be difficult to find. Addresses change and pages can disappear over time. If you find problems with any of the listed Web sites in this publication, please contact Sarah Jackson Hill, 310 W. 19th St., Suite 100, Cheyenne, WY, 82001, 307-633-4383, sjackson@uwyo.edu.

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