

Real Simplifier

How to Set a Table

PULL OFF A POLISHED PLACE SETTING WITH A REFRESHER FROM ETIQUETTE AND EVENT PROS.

By Maggie Puniewska

Besides catching crumbs, the bread plate functions as a place for discards (like turkey bones).



Set a water glass and a wineglass (if you're serving wine) above the knife.



DO A PRACTICE RUN

Set the table a day or two before so you have time to clean or polish. Include platters to see if you need a side table to fit everything, says Daniel Post Senning, great-great-grandson of Emily Post and coauthor of the 19th edition of *Emily Post's Etiquette*.

MIND THE GAPS

Space out each element by about an inch. That's roughly the width of an adult's thumb or a child's first three fingers. Leave ample space between settings to keep neighbors from knocking elbows.

Only put out what you'll use. Not having a salad? Nix the extra fork. Same goes for the spoon if soup isn't on the menu.



SKIP DESSERTWARE

Since most sweet stuff comes out after dinner, wait until the table has been cleared before setting out fresh plates, says Stephanie Selaiden, director of events at Mattie's at Green Pastures in Austin, Texas.

Opt for a cloth napkin at special occasions. Lay it on the salad or entrée plate, underneath the fork, or to the left of the fork.

MASTER PLACEMENT BASICS

To remember—or teach kids—the order of flatware, follow the FORKS acronym used by Emily Post. Starting from the left: F for fork, O for the shape of the plate, K for knife, and S for spoon (skip the R). Trying to recall where the bread plate and drinks go? Stand behind the chair and make the "OK" symbol with both hands. Your left hand will form a *b*, for bread, and your right hand will form a *d*, for drinks.