

A Lesson on Table Manners

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Introduction

Table manners vary from culture to culture. What is acceptable in one country may be considered extremely rude in another country. Not knowing how to correctly position and handle each of the utensils, being uncertain about the proper posture and not knowing polite dining behavior is often a cause of embarrassment or awkwardness for the EFL student. Students from Western cultures can usually rely on what they have been taught at home but students from Eastern countries generally need to be explicitly taught what is appropriate at the dinner table. (Chinese students, for example, need to be told that burping is not appropriate.) This important cultural information can be conveyed through a demonstration and an online information searching activity. This lesson seeks to introduce students to dining etiquette in the United States.

- Level: intermediate to high-intermediate
- Time: approximately 2 hours
- Materials:
 - a complete dinner set for one person including bread and service plates, salad and dinner forks, soup spoon, fish and meat knives, dessert fork and knife, water and wine glasses, and napkin
 - computers with a web browser and Internet access.

Procedure

1. Introduce the activity by asking a student volunteer to set the table.
2. Invite the class to comment on whether every item on the table is in its proper place. Guide the students into placing everything in its right place.
3. Ask the students to brainstorm the dos and don'ts of table manners in pairs. Have them share the results of the class but do not offer comments or make corrections.
4. Hand out an assignment including a selection of the true or false questions following this section. Depending on the number of students in the class and the equipment available, students can work individually or in teams.
5. Instruct students to find the answers at the following web sites:
 - <http://www.leaderu.com/isr/lifeinamerica/tablemanners.html>
 - <http://www.bsu.edu/students/careers/students/interviewing/dinetsps/>
 - <http://www.bsu.edu/students/careers/students/interviewing/dining/>
 - http://www.cuisinenet.com/digest/custom/etiquette/manners_intro.shtmlTell them to explore the above web sites in order and make them aware that the language on the last web site is the most difficult.
6. Circulate around the classroom addressing technical difficulties or answering questions.
7. Go over the assignment with the entire class inviting comments on whether the rule is applicable the students' culture and elaborating on each answer to reinforce the correct ideas.

Sample True (T) or False (F) Questions

1. If your fork falls on the floor, pick it up, clean it with your napkin, and continue using it.
(F)
2. When you have finished eating, refold your napkin to the way it was before and put it next to

your plate. (F)

3. You should excuse yourself if you must leave the table during a meal. (T)
4. You should stand up to get the salt if it is out of your reach. (F)
5. Don't burp because it is considered rude. (T)
6. Always use the water glass to your right. (T)
7. Keep your elbows off the table, especially when you are eating. (T)
8. Your bread and butter plate is located towards the left of an imaginary line across your service plate. (T)
9. When you finish your meal, put your fork and knife back on the table where they were before. (F)
10. If there are two forks on the table, you should start using the fork closest to the plate. (F)
11. If there are bones in your food, spit them out and put them on the tablecloth. (F)
12. Make slurping sounds when you are eating noodles to show how good they are. (F)
13. In the American style of using silverware, you switch the fork to your right hand to bring food into your mouth. (T)
14. If you do not want a certain food, make an elaborate excuse about why you can't have it. (F)
15. Ask your hostess for a doggy bag to take home the food you cannot finish. (F)
16. If you are the guest, you should not order the most expensive item on the menu unless it is recommended by your host. (T)
17. Go to the bathroom to remove food caught in your teeth. (T)
18. If a piece of food falls off your plate, don't touch it and leave it on the table. (F)
19. Spoon the soup away from you and sip it from the side of the spoon. (T)
20. If the dessert spoon and fork are already on the table, they should be above your plate. (T)

You can also have your students do this same quiz online at <http://a4esl.org/q/f/z/zz25tsk.htm>.

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<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Kung-TableManners.html>