

# PREPARE...Meal & Dress Etiquette

## THE BUSINESS MEAL

There will be times when interviews occur during a meal. The following tips will help you avoid uncomfortable situations that can detract from your interview appearance and performance. Do not underestimate the importance of good manners at a business meal; they truly can be a deciding factor in a hiring situation.

- Silence your cell phone.
- Do not order the most expensive item on the menu.
- It is not recommended to order alcohol unless the host orders. Even then, order in moderation **ONLY** if you are of age and never at lunch.
- Avoid ordering foods that are difficult to eat; order foods that can be eaten with a fork.
- When everyone is seated, unfold your napkin and place it on your lap. The napkin should be folded in half with the fold toward your waist.
- When you are finished with your meal, place your napkin to the right or left side of your plate on the table.
- Wait for everyone to arrive before beginning any portion of the meal.
- Wait for your host to begin eating before you start eating.
- Rest your forearms and elbow on the table only between courses.
- Pass both the salt and pepper shakers when someone asks for just one.
- Bread is to the left of the plate and drinks are to the right. You can remember this by forming the letter “b” for bread with your thumb and forefinger on your left hand and a “d” for drinks on your right hand.
- When eating bread, break off a small piece over the bread plate. Butter the broken portion and eat just that small piece. For the butter, take an amount as it is passed around the table and put it on your plate to use.
- Do not discuss diets or the healthiness/unhealthiness of yours or other people’s food; it might be offensive or make someone uncomfortable.
- Do not place bags, purses, phones, sunglasses, or keys on the table.
- Do not apply makeup or brush your hair at the table.
- Do not order a to-go container for leftover food.
- Typically, the host will pay the bill.

*So many decisions are made over lunch, coffee, or dinner. Your manners will be observed and evaluated. Your table manners represent how you might interact with clients.*

