



# 4-H Table Setting Activity

## Why Should You Participate in the Table Setting Activity?

You can have fun learning how to:

- Express originality and creativity in choosing a theme
- Properly set a table
- Plan nutritious meals
- Choose a costume that fits your theme
- Use your skills for entertaining

Did you know that you can be a designer each time you set the table? A designer chooses and arranges things according to a plan.

Actually, there is more than one way to set a table. The usual way to set a table is to put all the dishes, flatware, and food on the table before anyone sits down.

When there is company or for a special meal, part of the food and dishes may be left in the kitchen and served later. Diners at a buffet or a picnic may fill their plates and glasses before they are seated. The way to set your table depends upon the way the meal is to be served. Be creative and have fun! Color, texture, design, and creativity are important.

For the Table Setting Activity, two place settings are to be displayed. These place settings will include:

- A table covering
- Dinnerware
- Stemware or glasses
- Flatware
- A centerpiece
- A menu of the food to be served
- DO NOT BRING FOOD
- You must furnish your own card table for the display unless it is a picnic where the table settings may be placed on an appropriate blanket or other covering on the floor.

The Table Setting Activity is open to all 4-H members enrolled in a Food and Nutrition project.

Participants select a theme and display two place settings. Entries are made by individuals only. They will be judged in Junior (Grades 3-5), Intermediate (Grades 6-8), and Senior (Grades 9-12) divisions. There will be two categories—informal and formal.

## Table Setting Terms to Know

What is **flatware**? Flatware includes knives, forks, spoons, and other eating utensils.

What is **dinnerware**? This includes the plates and possibly bowls used for eating.

What is **stemware or glassware**? These are the goblets, glasses, cups and saucers, or mugs used to drink liquids in the meal.

What is a **centerpiece**? This is a decorative piece you choose to put in the center of your table to tie your theme together.

What is a **cover**? A cover is the space needed for each person's dishes and contains the dinnerware and flatware for the meal being served.

What are **table appointments**? These include any of the items used to set a table: tablecloth, placemats, dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and centerpiece.

Remember, be creative and have fun!

## Activity Categories

4-H members may enter casual or formal themed place settings.

Casual themed place settings could be planned for indoors, outdoors, use any type of cover (tablecloth, blanket or paper), and any type of table service.

Formal themed place settings include candles, more than three pieces of flatware, china, tablecloth and/or placemats, and cloth napkins. Formal themes are for occasions where you would dress up.

Overall place settings should be an expression of your creativity; homemade touches are encouraged! It should be evident which theme you have selected.

## Set Up and Judging

You need a card table for the display (except for the picnic category, in which an appropriate blanket or other covering may be placed on the floor). Please make sure your card table is sturdy and can handle the weight of your table setting. Please check your fair Premium List to find out if you need to bring a table or if it will be provided.

Sanitation is important. You must wash your hands and sanitize the table before beginning. Linens should be clean and pressed. Glassware, flatware, and dinnerware must be clean, sparkling, and free of fingerprints. When setting the table, do not put your fingers on the bowls, tines, or blades of the flatware. Do not put your fingers inside the glassware. Make sure the dinnerware is free of fingerprints. Using a dishtowel helps keep all items clean and shiny.

During judging, you present your table setting to the judge by telling about your ideas and why you chose this particular theme. You should view yourself as a host and the judge as your guest. Extend a welcome to your guest and present your ideas behind your theme, choice of menu, food preparation, and food handling for your meal.

Following your presentation, be prepared to answer any questions your guest may have. Intermediate and Senior exhibitors should be able to describe the ingredients and preparation required for all menu items, as well as food safety and sanitation practices.

## How to Create Your Table Setting

**Theme:** What is the occasion—a family dinner, a holiday, or lunch with friends? Select a theme which fits the occasion. Possibilities can run from a fishing party sack lunch to a formal Mother's Day Dinner.

**Table Appointments:** These include any item used to set a table: tablecloth, placemats, dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and centerpiece. Choose table appointments to fit the occasion and carry out the theme. Paper plates, plasticware, and paper napkins may be used for a picnic but they are not appropriate for a formal dinner. Flatware and dishware must be safe to eat from (i.e., no glitter, glue, etc. should be used on eating surfaces and chipped plates or glassware are never acceptable).

**Table Covering:** This is the backdrop for the food and table appointments placed on it. It protects the table and makes for less noise. Placemats and/or tablecloths may be used. Sometimes the table is left bare. Choose a covering which is appropriate for the occasion and the

other table appointments. You may match or blend colors and textures in the dishes—or use something quite different for contrast.

**Place Setting:** Allow at least 20 inches for each person's dishes. This is called a cover and each cover is set exactly the same. A cover contains the dinnerware and flatware for the meal being served.

- Put the plate, china, pottery, paper, glass, etc. in the center of the cover about one inch from the edge of the table. If a table is not used at the event, placement may vary.
- Place the knives and spoons on the right side, the forks on the left about one inch from the edge of the table. Turn the cutting edge of the knife towards the plate. If there is more than one piece in each cover, such as one dinner fork and a salad fork or one teaspoon and a soup spoon, place the one that will be used first outside the other.
- Traditionally folded napkins are placed next to the forks with the fold to the left so it opens like a book. Decorative and creative folds and placement are encouraged.
- The first beverage glass is placed about one inch above the tip of the knife. If serving more than one beverage, place the additional glass(es) to the right of the first glass in order served.
- If coffee or tea is served, the cup is placed on the saucer and set to the right of the spoon. Have the cup handle pointing to the right.
- Salad, bread, and/or dessert plate(s) or bowl(s) may be placed above the fork(s).

When selecting your cover, include a dish for each course. Placement may vary according to how and when food is served.

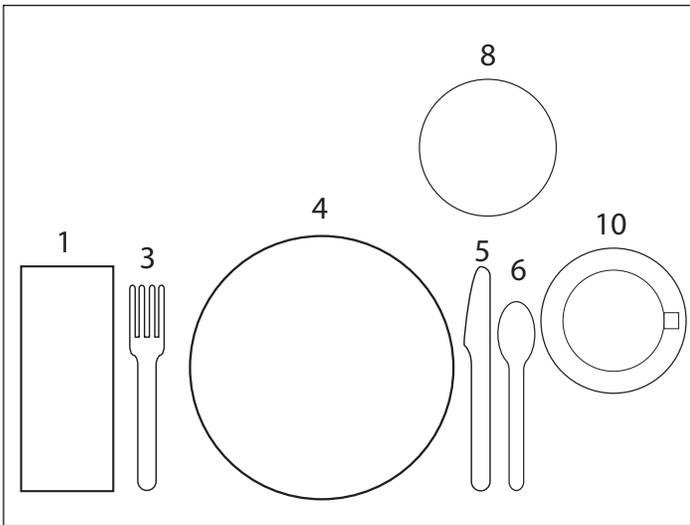
*(See Table Setting Examples on page 3.)*

## Checklist for Correct Placement of a Cover

1. If placemats are used, the bottom edge of the placemats should be at the edge of the table and should be straight. A tablecloth should be straight and the overhang should be even on all sides.
2. The flatware, plate, and napkins should be one inch from the edge of the table.
3. The plate is always in the center of the place setting.
4. The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate.
5. If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.

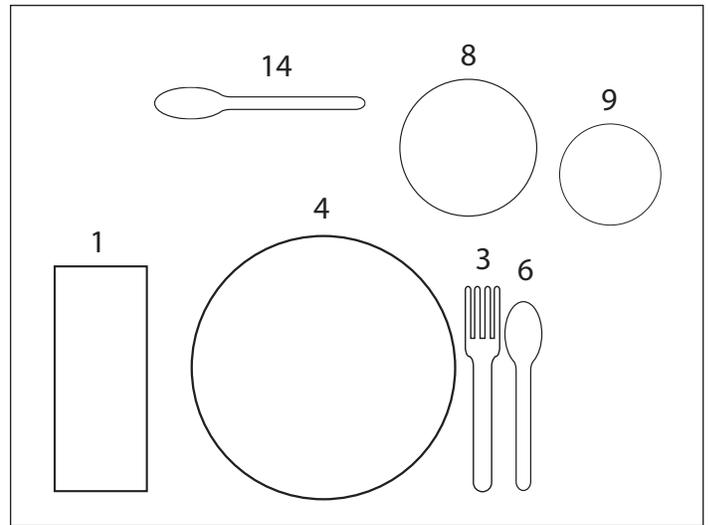
## TABLE SETTING EXAMPLES

### 1. Informal



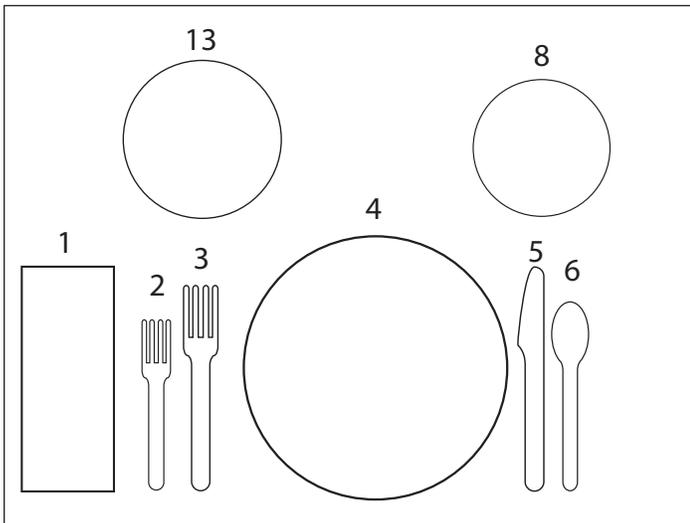
Napkins, utensils, and plate are lined up evenly about 1 inch from edge of table. Water glass is above the tip of the knife.

### 3. Informal



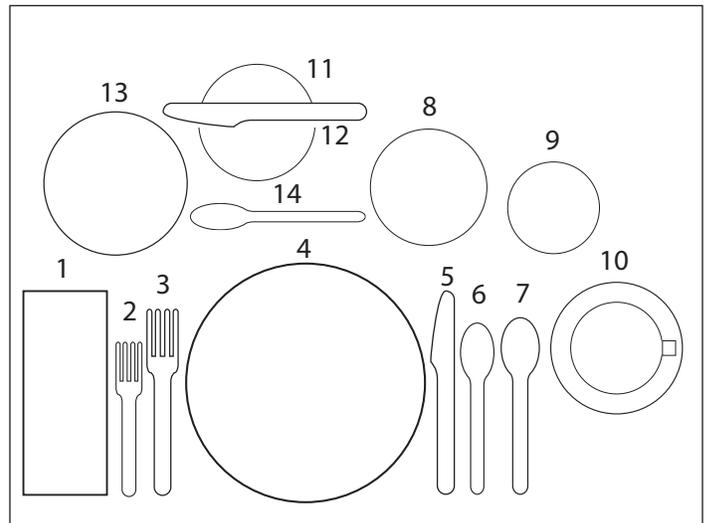
When no knife is needed, the fork may be placed to the right of the plate.

### 2. Informal



A salad plate is placed above the fork and a salad fork to the left of the dinner fork.

### 4. Formal



With limited table space, the bread and butter plate and the salad plate can be placed above the napkin and forks. A soup spoon and a beverage glass are also added.

### Key to diagrams:

- |                |                              |                          |
|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Napkin      | 5. Knife                     | 10. Cup & saucer/mug     |
| 2. Salad fork  | 6. Spoon                     | 11. Bread & butter plate |
| 3. Dinner fork | 7. Soup spoon                | 12. Butter spreader      |
| 4. Plate       | 8. Water glass               | 13. Salad plate          |
|                | 9. Additional beverage glass | 14. Iced tea spoon       |

6. The napkin is placed to the left of the fork, with the fold on the left (unless a decorative/creative fold is used). The napkin may also go under a fork or on top of the plate.
7. The knife is placed to the right of the plate with the sharp blade facing in towards the plate.
8. The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.
9. If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.
10. The soup bowl may be placed on the dinner plate.
11. The drinking glass is placed at the tip of the knife.
12. If salad, bread and/or dessert plate(s) or bowl(s) is/are used, place at the top of the fork(s).
13. The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoon(s). The handle points to the right.
14. If a knife is not needed, placing the fork on the right side is acceptable.

**Centerpiece:** The centerpiece should be coordinated with the table appointment and be appropriate for the occasion. The centerpiece should be visible to all as if the entire table was set and should not obstruct anyone's view of each other. You may select or make your centerpiece. Centerpiece candles are NOT to be lit. Points will be deducted for lit candles.

**Menu:** When planning a menu, first decide on the main dish. Select appropriate vegetables, appetizer, soup, or salad. Add a bread, dessert, and beverage, if desired. Use MyPlate to plan nutritious meals. Breakfast, party, and picnic menus should contain two or three food groups. Other meals should contain five food groups. Participants are encouraged to develop interesting and creative menus. For example, you might name a food to fit your theme. For more information on MyPlate, go online to: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).

Note: The use of alcoholic beverages in any menu will disqualify the exhibit.

**What to Wear as a Participant:** Participants should choose to wear clothing that will complement the theme/occasion of their table setting.

## Writing the Menu

The menu should be displayed a medium of choice (e.g., index card, ceramic tile, chalkboard, etc.) that is at least 4"x6" or larger, and printed or typed by the participant. The menu may be decorated and/or propped up, if desired.

- List the foods in the order in which they are served. Every menu will not include all the foods listed below.

Appetizer  
Main Dish  
Starchy Vegetable  
Other Vegetables  
Salad  
Bread  
Dessert  
Beverage

- Group foods served in one course. Use single line spacing between food items and double spacing between courses.
- Use capital letters at the beginning of all words except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Correct spelling is important.
- When an item on the menu has an accompaniment:
  - ~ Place the main item to the left and the accompaniment to the right.

**Braised Pork Chops Applesauce**

- ~ Or, you may center the main item and write the accompanying item underneath.

**Braised Pork Chops  
Applesauce**

- ~ If more than one accompaniment appears, place one at each side on the same line.

**Sesame Crackers Tomato Bouillon Saltines**

- ~ Or place both on the same line below.

**Tomato Bouillon  
Sesame Crackers Saltines**

- When a food is commonly prepared in more than one way, avoid confusion by describing the method of cooking, such as: Roast Turkey or French Fried Potatoes.
- List each food with the exception of butter, cream, sugar, or salad dressing, unless it is something special, such as Honey Butter or Poppy-seed Dressing.
- List beverages last.
- Plan the spacing and arrangement of the items on the menu so that the written menu is symmetrical.
- Consider creativeness when choosing names of menu items (except for formal menus). Formal menus must use original names of items. Example: use Patriotic Punch for a 4th of July theme and Cherry Punch for a formal theme.

## Examples for a Formal Meal

Broiled Ham Grilled Pineapple Slices Cole Slaw  Hot Gingerbread with Applesauce  Coffee Milk
Cream of Broccoli Soup Curried Toast Fingers  Fresh Fruit Salad Plate with Lime Sherbet Crescent Rolls  Glazed Chocolate Roll Coffee Milk

## Examples for an Informal Meal

Hot Dogs Potato Chips Baked Beans Watermelon Slices Lemonade
<u>Space Adventure Birthday</u> Countdown to Corn Dog Astro Chips Moon Pies Taste of Mars Jello Jigglers Milky Way Fudge Brownies Out of This World Root Beer

## Common Errors in Planning Meals

### Preparation and Type of Food:

- No main dish
- More than one main dish
- Too many foods prepared in the same way, such as fried foods, creamed food, or foods with sauces
- Too many starchy foods
- Same fruit or vegetable more than once
- Too many high protein foods

### Nutrition:

- Too many foods from one food group
- Missing food groups
- Contain a variety of foods not meeting the nutritional needs of those for whom it is planned

### Temperature:

- Too many foods of the same temperature
- Not enough time allotted for preparation
- Ignoring the need to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
- Food not stored at safe temperature (special consideration needed for picnics)

### Flavor:

- All bland flavor
- Too many strong flavors
- Repetition of food or flavor
- No tart or acid-flavor
- Too many sweet or too many sour foods

### Color:

- Too many foods of same color
- No contrast or variation
- Clashing or unpleasant color scheme

### Texture:

- Too many soft foods
- Too many chewy foods
- Too many crispy or crunchy foods
- Lack of variety in texture

### Size:

- Too many mixtures
- Too many small pieces of the same size and shape
- Too many similar shapes
- Lack of variety in shape



4-H 

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