

Table Etiquette

An important routine for children



Teaching toddlers and preschoolers about table manners will allow them to show respect and appreciation during meals (and in other situations), and it will help them show that the others at the table are important. Table manners and etiquette are important social skills that your child will use as they grow up.

Napkins

Teaching children how to use a napkin is important because it helps them develop social skills, respect, and courtesy. It also helps them feel confident in social situations. Below are some other reasons why it's important to teach children how to use a napkin!

What do I do with a napkin?

*Use it to wipe your hands and face when you are messy.

**Fold and place it in your lap or in your shirt collar.

***If you don't have a plate or container for your child at lunch/snack time, use it to place your snack on, so your food is not directly on a table

10 Good Reasons to use a napkin at an early age:

- Shows respect, teaches patience and courtesy
- Using a napkin properly shows respect for others at the table
- Prepares for formal situations
- Children can use napkin etiquette in formal settings like weddings, at restaurants (yes, even fast food), and at school.
- Helps with independence and confidence
- Folding napkins can help children develop self-help skills.
- Refines hand-eye coordination
- Folding napkins can help refine a child's small motor skills and pincer grip (pre-writing).
- Teaches simple fractions like a whole (1), 1/2 and 1/4
- The shapes involved in folding napkins can help teach children about geometry.

Benefits of using napkins and table manners at home

- Teaching toddlers and preschoolers about table manners will allow them to show respect and appreciation during meals (and in other situations), and it will help them show that the others at the table are important. Table manners and etiquette are important social skills that your child will use as they grow up.

- Napkin Use: Show your child how to place the napkin on a table where they can use it, and how to use it to wipe their mouth.
- When ready, teach them how to place it in their lap and keep it there, so it is not on the table.

Tips for teaching table etiquette



Serve soups and stews, yogurts and desserts while encouraging your child to use a spoon and/or fork.



Experiment with different utensils. Chopsticks for asian cuisine, fork and a spoon for spaghetti, a very dull knife for pie or meat to practice cutting.

- Give your child opportunities to wipe his face with a cloth, towel, blanket, tissue and wipes.
- Point to the napkin and then to your child's face.
- Physically place the napkin in your child's hand and guide it toward his face.
- During play, have your child wipe the doll's face and hands. Then have your child do the same on his own face.
- Verbally instruct your child to use a napkin during meals to clean his own face while you are physically wiping your face.
- When taking a bath, have your child wash hands and face with a washcloth.
- Give your child a napkin during all meals and snacks.
- With practice, your child will learn to use a napkin appropriately.