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Table Manners

Quick meals on the go certainly make our lives easier, but they don't contribute to teaching our children good table manners. No wonder they don't always know the proper way to behave at the dinner table. It is never too early to start teaching them how they should approach meal time, whether it be at home, school, restaurant, or as a guest in someone's home.

The following information came from Emily Post's Etiquette Book. I encourage you to begin teaching these steps to your children. They will thank you someday!

Starting a Meal

Unfold napkin roughly in half and place on lap; no shaking out napkin.
Leave plates and utensils alone until the meal begins.
Watch the host and follow meal-starting rituals without comment.

Sitting at the Table

Sit with good posture and feet firmly on the floor throughout the meal.
Keep free hand in lap when not cutting food or passing items.

Eating

Hold and use spoons, forks, and knives correctly.
Cute bite-size pieces – only an amount that can be chewed with the mouth closed.
Take reasonable portions of food; ask for seconds.
Try a bite of everything; leave uneaten food on the plate, not hidden in the napkins.
Be observant and offer to pass food and table items to others.
Use knife blade or bits of bread crust – not fingers – as “pushers.”
Eat neatly; help to clean up any major spills.
If unsure how to eat something, ask a parent or host.

Talking and Noise

Initiate some pleasant mealtime conversation.
Don't whisper or talk to one person exclusively.
Drink quietly, holding glass with one hand.

Ending the Meal

Place knife and fork angled on plate, knife blade inward.

Place napkin (dirty parts hidden) to left of plate or in the center if plate has been removed.

Remain at the table until everyone is finished, unless excused early.

Offer to help clear the table when appropriate to the situation.

School Eating Do's and Don'ts

- * **Do** follow instructions given by the adults in charge.
- * **Don't** push, grab, or roughhouse in serving lines.
- * **Do** hold food trays with two hands; don't touch another person's tray.
- * **Don't** ask for someone else's food and drink.
- * **Don't** make comments about other people's meals or eating styles.
- * **Do** leave the table clean; dispose of trays, napkins, and drink containers as instructed.
- * **Do** report any spills or messes to an adult.
- * **Do** thank staff members and others who serve food, collect money, or assist in any way.

For more information, please contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office at 903/473-5000, ext. 157.

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