

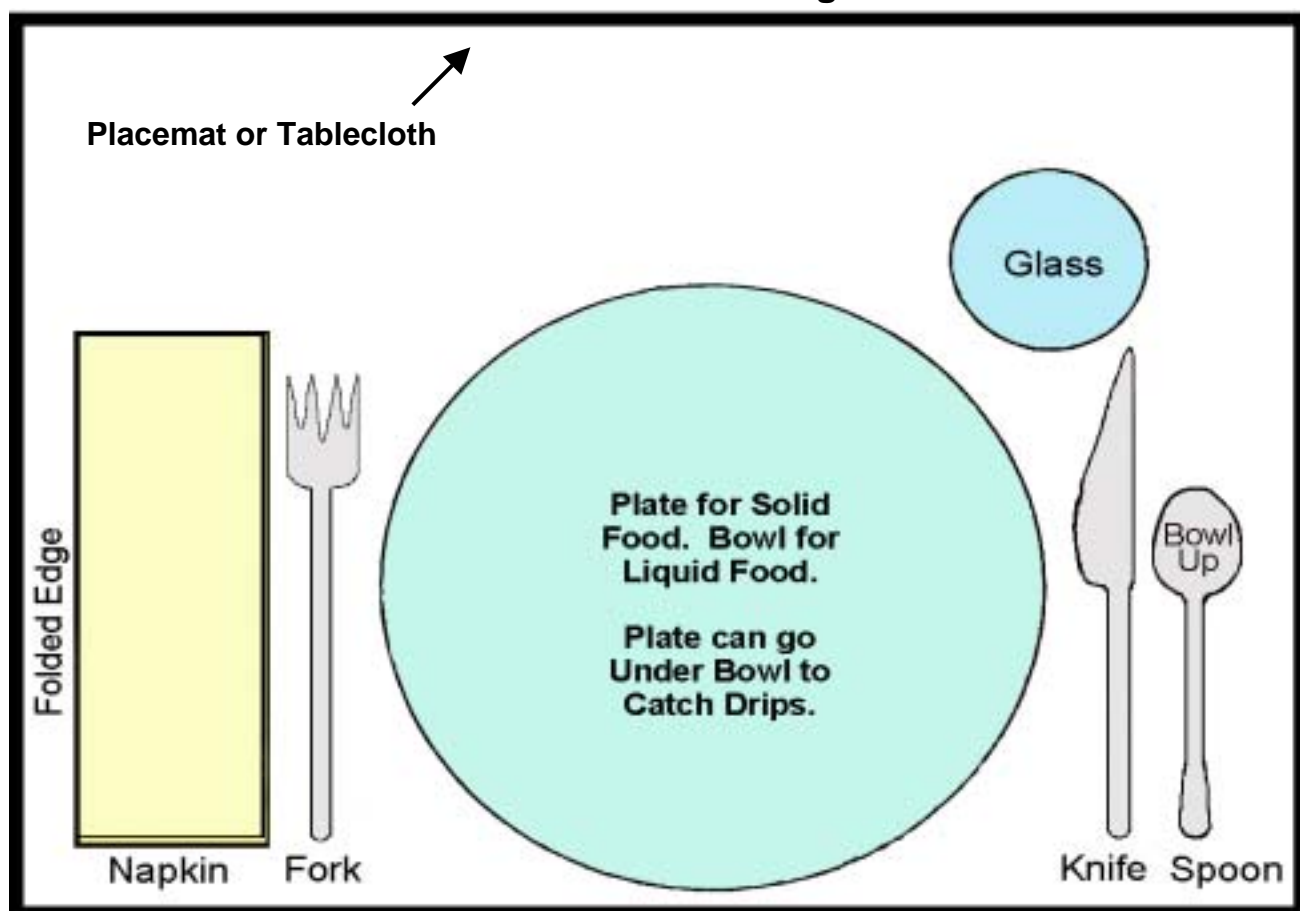


## Setting the Table

Knowing how to set a table and use the utensils helps children feel comfortable in social situations.

Every country has traditions and customs about how food, dishes and eating utensils are laid out so people can eat. The table setting below is the usual setting in the U.S. for many social settings and in restaurants. Using this table setting at home can help children feel more comfortable in social situations. If this setting is different from your customs, talk to your children about the differences.

### Here is the usual table setting in the U.S



Encourage discussion about alternative table settings.

## Using Forks, Knives and Spoons

**Fork** – Used to put food in the mouth, to cut food into small pieces, and to hold food while cutting it with a knife.

Americans hold the fork in their left hand while cutting meat with their knife. They put the fork in the right hand to put food into their mouth.

**Knife** – Used to cut meat and food that cannot be cut with a fork.

**Spoon** – Used for soups and foods with sauce or liquids. Food is eaten from the side of a spoon.

**Napkin** – The open corner of the napkin is toward the plate so it is easy to open and put on the lap.

Napkins are kept on the lap during a meal. When finished eating, the napkin is put back in the same spot, but not refolded. If someone leaves the table during a meal, they put the napkin on their chair to signal they are coming back. They put it on the table if they are not coming back.

**Serving Dishes** – Serving dishes hold food to be shared. It is good manners to take only your share so there is enough to go around.

Food is passed around the table to the right---counter clockwise.

## A Bit of Table History

Many U.S. table manners started in old England with the Anglo-Saxons --- about 1000 AD.

In old England, tablecloths covered rough boards to make a dinner table. Getting ready for dinner was called “laying the board”. Plates were called trenchers and made of hard bread. Trenchers were eaten as part of the meal, given to the poor, or tossed to dogs.

When America was settled in the 1600s, families cooked and ate in the same room. Eating was messy. They used knives, spoons, and plenty of napkins, but no forks. Plates were made of wood. By the Revolutionary War, plates were pottery or china.

Forks were first used in America in the 1700's. Before then, people used knives like forks are now used. Knives were used to cut up food and put it in the mouth---a dangerous business.