



DTA Activities of Daily Living

Eating Etiquette Unit

Welcome to the DTA Activities of Daily Living Skills Program, designed to help students with complex communication needs build the essential skills needed for a successful life. The Eating Etiquette Unit will introduce students to mealtime manners and ways to create a welcoming environment that supports appropriate interaction while eating. Each lesson is crafted to be accessible and meaningful, providing students with opportunities to learn the skills needed to become more independent in their daily lives.



Students will explore relevant vocabulary related to eating etiquette, reinforced by a book that sets the foundation for each skill. Hands-on activities and varied practice opportunities are included to help students learn through repetition in a dynamic, supportive environment.

WHY?

Teaching eating etiquette helps students build essential social skills, develop confidence in a variety of mealtime settings, and contribute to a calm, positive environment. When students learn how to use polite table manners, they **practice showing respect for others** and gain the tools needed to participate in shared meals at school, home, or in the community.

WHO?

These lessons and activities are created specifically for **Middle and High School students** with complex communication and learning needs in mind, however many of the activities are appropriate for elementary aged students.

WHEN?

Be intentional about finding and scheduling specific **time for students to learn and practice** eating etiquette. Use school breakfast, lunch, and community-based activities to discuss key items.

WHERE?

Learning happens everywhere! Pair the desk activities with hands-on experience to make learning stick! The activities can be used every day to provide **repetition with variety**.

WHAT?

For the Eating Etiquette unit, you will receive the following resources:

- Teacher's Guide (this document)
- Book - Manners Please! A Guide to Eating Etiquette
- Book - Setting the Table and Clean Up
- Desk activity (e.g., setting the table)
- Vocabulary Cards
- Communication Board
- Mind Map

Eating Etiquette: Sample Goals & Prepare

Sample Goals:

- **Using Table Manners** - Student will use 3 basic table manners (e.g., using a napkin) during a structured meal activity.
- **Appropriate Conversation Skills** - Student will participate in mealtime conversation by sharing one comment and asking one appropriate question during a small-group meal.
- **Managing Personal Space** - Student will keep hands, utensils, and food within their own eating space during meals.
- **Following Mealtimes Routines** - Student will follow a 3-step mealtime routine (e.g., sit safely, place napkin, wait for others).
- **Using Utensils Appropriately** - Student will use utensils appropriately (e.g., fork for solid foods, spoon for liquids).
- **Cleaning Up After Eating** - Student will complete a 3-step cleanup routine (e.g., throw away trash, wipe area, return tray).

Skills-at-a-Glance



Basic Skills	Advanced Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• washing hands before a meal.• using a napkin• using utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• following mealtime routine• mealtime conversation• setting table

General Preparation:

- Review materials in this guide.
- Determine when eating etiquette instruction will take place.



Tip: Use the Classroom Routine Planner to create your plan! DTA Website members can access the full planner on the DTA Website. All others, please find the planner on [Teacher's Pay Teachers](#).

- For students using AAC devices, make sure the support team is able to locate necessary vocabulary for modeling purposes.
- Print one copy of the Communication Board and Setting the Table desk activity for each student.
- Print and laminate the Mealtime Conversation Idea cards.

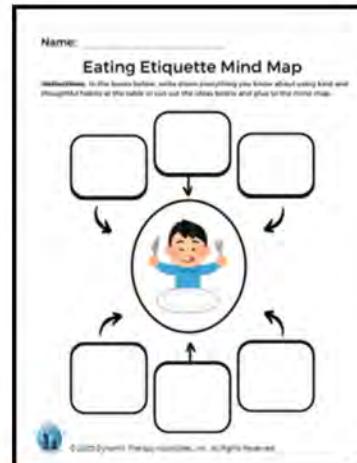
Eating Etiquette Materials

See the Teacher Tips and Schedule-At-A-Glance for ideas on how to use these materials!

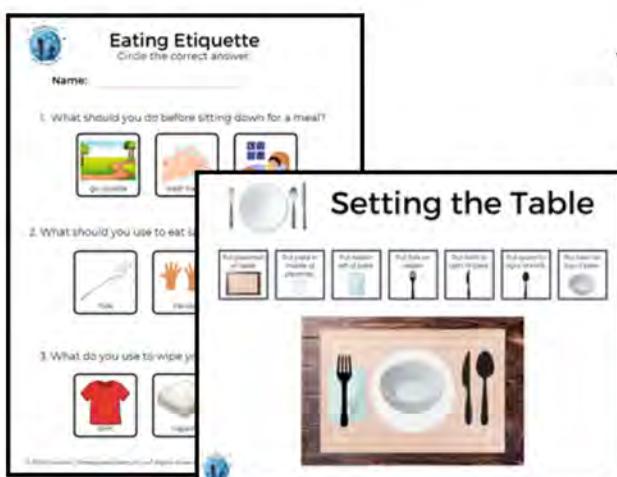
Books



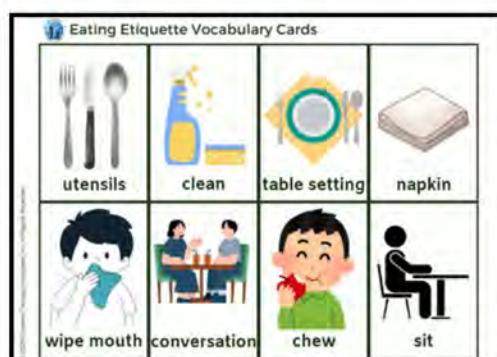
Mind Map



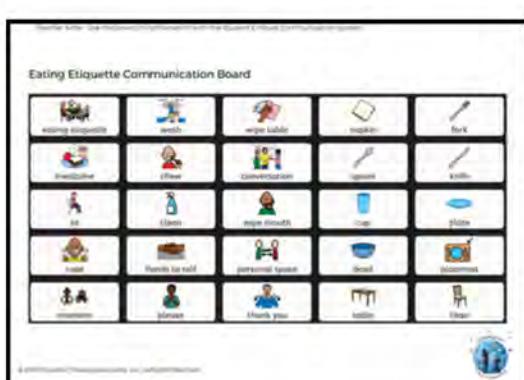
Worksheets



Vocabulary Cards



Communication Board

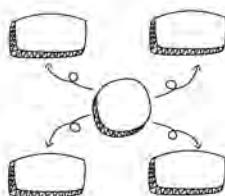


Mealtime Conversation Ideas



Eating Etiquette: Teacher Tips

Ideas to Support Learning



Help students learn new concepts by using the Mind Map to brainstorm before each lesson.



Make learning stick by reading the book every day for a week (or more!) to enhance cognitive functioning and to increase knowledge.



Use the vocabulary cards to provide visual supports during lessons and activities.



Worksheets can be completed as a group activity or as individual desk work. They can also be used to assess student knowledge.

Ideas to Support Communication



Use communication boards to help students actively participate during lessons. Give one to every student to support vocabulary learning.



For students who use AAC devices, make sure to locate related words before starting a lesson.



Provide wait time! Pause for 10 seconds after commenting or asking a question. This gives students time to process and respond.



Point to symbols on communication boards and devices as you talk. This is called modeling.

Eating Etiquette: Schedule At-A-Glance

Use the following daily schedule as a guide and adjust to meet the specific needs of your classroom. The goal should be to provide **repetition with variety** as students learn eating etiquette skills. This strategy builds confidence and empowers students to succeed and gives students many opportunities to learn and practice new skills.

Day 1: Introduction to Skill

- Build background knowledge - Explore the Mind Map to activate prior knowledge.
- Read the Manners book. Pause on each page and invite students to engage.
- Use communication board and AAC devices to model relevant vocabulary.
- Use flashcards to provide visual support while reading the book.

Day 2: Vocabulary

- Read the Manners book again. Introduce Setting the Table book. Pause on each page and invite students to engage.
- Project the books using your classroom smart board. Use the questions at the back of each book to lead group discussion.
- Use flashcards and communication boards to provide visual support.

Day 3: Hands-On Skills

- Read both books again. Pause on each page and invite students to engage.
- Use the Setting the Table desk activity or practice in your classroom eating area using real items (e.g., plate, bowl, cup, etc.).
- Introduce Mealtime Conversation Idea cards during breakfast or lunch.
- Help students who use AAC devices find vocabulary on their system.

Day 4: Skill Practice

- Read both books again. Pause on each page and invite students to engage.
- Use the flashcards to play a memory game or Go Fish to support vocabulary learning.
- Provide additional practice with setting the table.
- Watch “How to Set the Table” video (link on p. 8).

Day 5: More Practice

- Read both books again, if needed. Pause on each page and invite students to engage.
- Watch “Table Manners” video (link on p. 8).
- Repeat lessons, as needed.

Eating Etiquette: Scope and Sequence (More ideas!)

Use the progression of skills outlined below as a guide. It's important to recognize that older students may need instruction or practice in foundational skills introduced earlier in the sequence.

Kindergarten–2nd Grade: Foundations

- Sit safely at the table for short periods
- Use simple polite words (“please,” “thank you”)
- Chew with mouth closed
- Use a napkin to wipe hands/face
- Follow 1–2 step mealtime directions
- Take turns during meals
- Keep hands and food in their own space
- Carry tray and throw away trash with support
- Follow a simple mealtime routine (sit → eat → clean up)

Grades 3–5: Building Independence

- Use utensils appropriately (fork, spoon)
- Pass items politely (“Can you pass the...?”)
- Participate in simple mealtime conversations
- Wait for others before starting to eat (with support)
- Keep food, hands, and utensils in personal space
- Follow a 3–4 step mealtime routine
- Identify appropriate vs. inappropriate mealtime behaviors
- Clean up eating area with minimal prompts

Grades 6–8: Social Etiquette & Confidence

- Engage in back-and-forth mealtime conversation
- Respond to social cues (“Would you like more?”)
- Use appropriate volume and tone at the table
- Demonstrate respectful eating habits in public settings
- Manage personal space and hygiene independently
- Follow full mealtime routines with minimal prompts
- Show flexibility with new foods or seating changes
- Problem-solve simple mealtime challenges

Grades 9–10: Community & Practical Life Skills

- Order food politely in a cafeteria or restaurant
- Interact appropriately with servers or staff
- Use full utensil skills (including knife use as appropriate)
- Handle unexpected situations (wrong order, crowded seating)
- Demonstrate mature conversation skills
- Understand basic tipping expectations
- Clean up independently in shared spaces
- Make choices from a menu with confidence

Grades 11–12: Adult-Ready Dining & Workplace Etiquette

- Demonstrate formal and informal dining etiquette
- Navigate workplace meals (staff lunches, celebrations)
- Join and exit group conversations politely
- Manage payment during meals
- Advocate for dietary needs respectfully
- Show confidence in a variety of dining environments
- Apply etiquette during special events (banquets, interviews)
- Demonstrate independence across all mealtime routines

Eating Etiquette: Extension Ideas and Resources

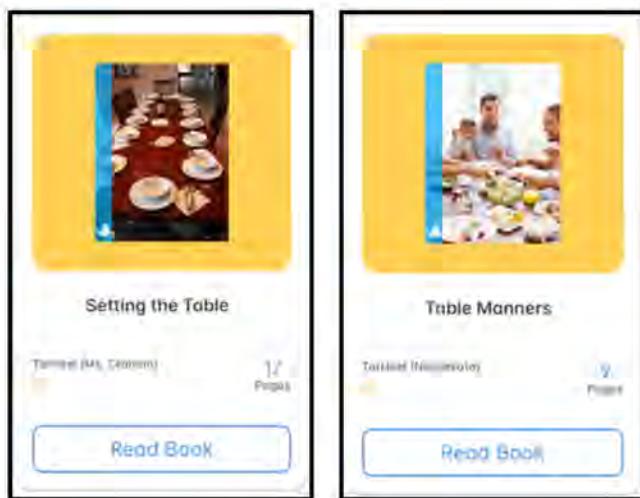
YouTube Videos

Use videos to support learning. A simple search on YouTube will give you loads of visual and auditory tools to use to support learning. Here are a couple to get you started:

- **Table Manners for Kids**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnHYYMEPXJU>
- **Please, Thank You, and Asking for Permission**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPhabSkn3sM>
- **How to Set the Table**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUkgIdAEths>

Monarch Reader

Monarch Reader is an online library of free books for beginning readers of all ages and adapted books for special education. Search for books related to eating etiquette or create your own!



Thanks for learning with us!



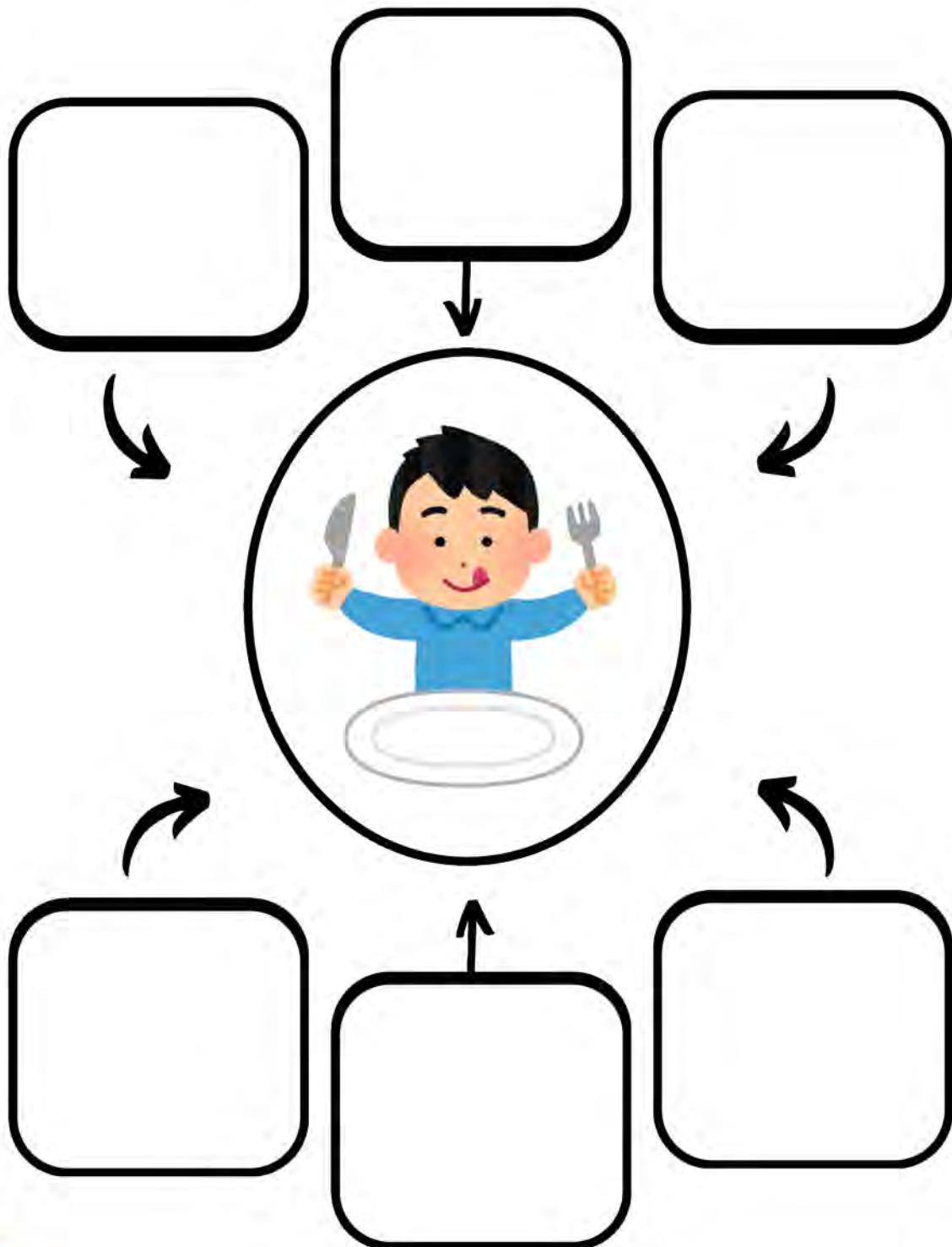
For additional books, recipes, AAC and Special Education products, please visit DTAschools.com & AACchicks TPT Store!



Name: _____

Eating Etiquette Mind Map

Instructions: In the boxes below, write down everything you know about using kind and thoughtful habits at the table or cut out the ideas below and glue to the mind map.





Teacher Note: Use this board in combination with the student's robust communication system.

Eating Etiquette Communication Board



Eating Etiquette Vocabulary Cards



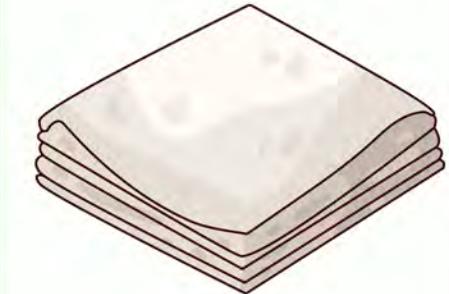
utensils



clean



table setting



napkin



wipe mouth



conversation

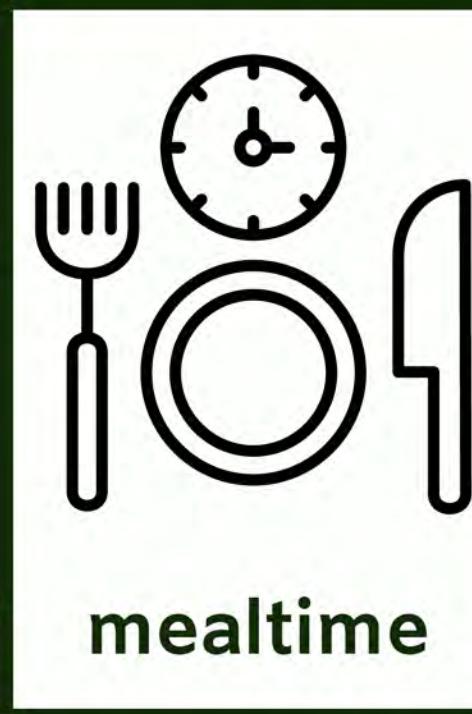
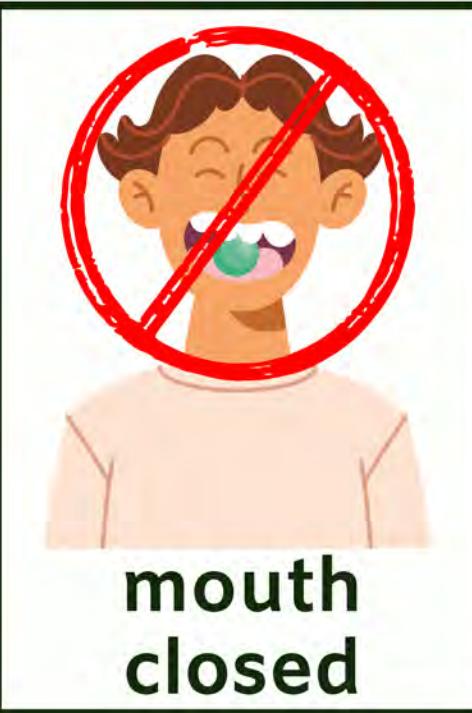
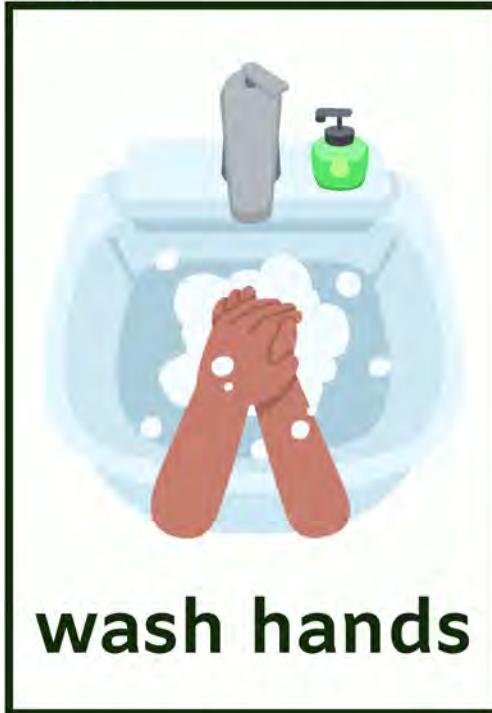


chew



sit

Eating Etiquette Vocabulary Cards



Manners Please!

A Guide to Eating Etiquette



Eating is something we do every day—but the way we eat can show respect for ourselves and for others. Eating etiquette means using kind and thoughtful habits at the table. These habits help everyone feel comfortable, included, and ready to enjoy their meal.

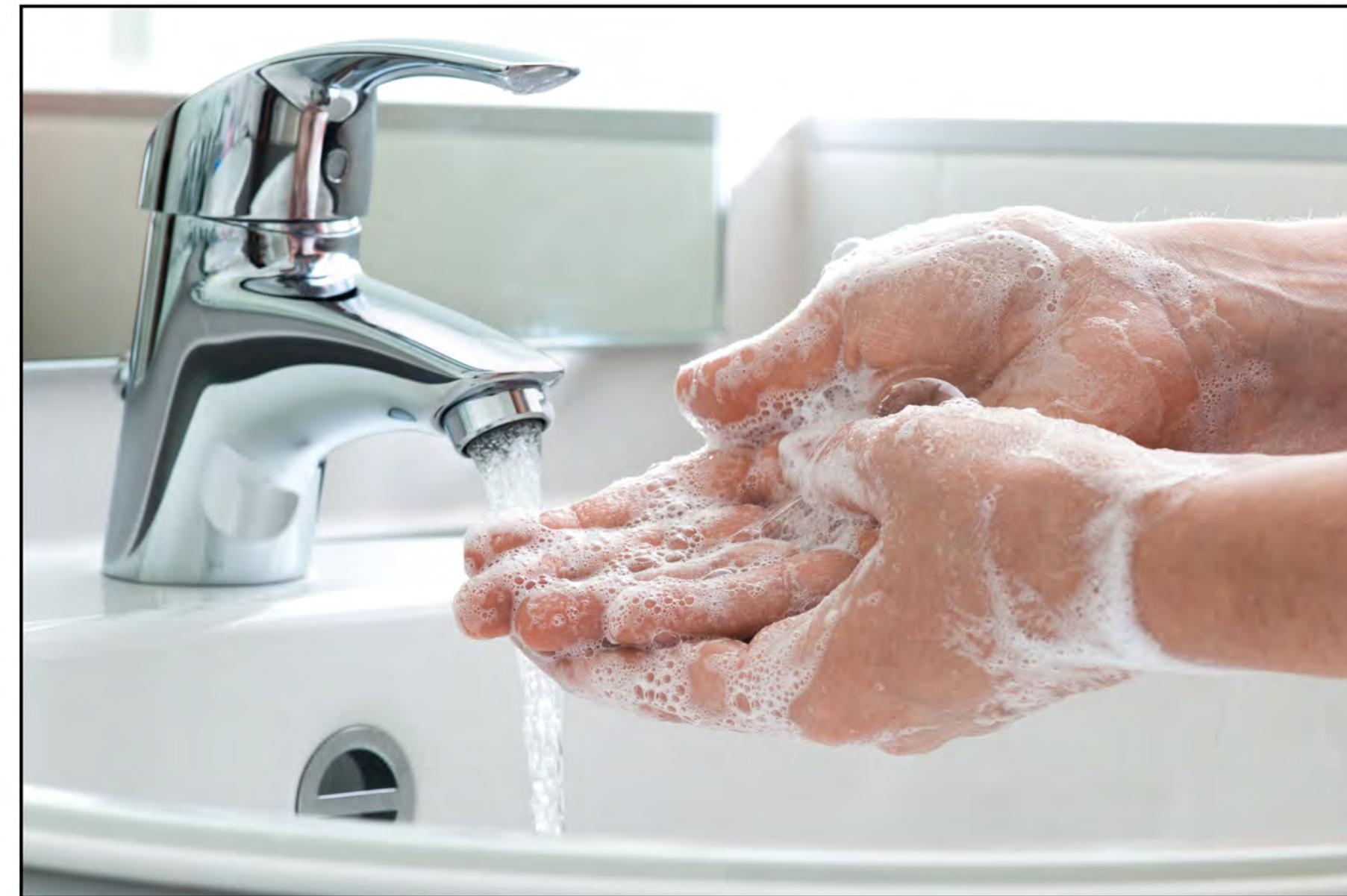


There are a few rules to remember when it's time to sit down at the table to eat.



Manners Please!

Rule #1: Come to the table with clean hands. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before a meal.



Manners Please!

Rule #2: Respect personal space. Keep your food, utensils, and hands to yourself unless sharing is a part of the meal.



Manners Please!

Rule #3: Use utensils unless you are eating a handheld food like a burger, pizza, or chips.



Manners Please!

Rule #4: Try to chew with your mouth closed.



Manners Please!

Rule #5: Ask before taking food. Grabbing food from someone's plate is rude!



Manners Please!

Rule #6: Wipe your hands and mouth with a napkin. This will help you stay clean and looking your best.



Manners Please!

Rule #7: Take turns in table conversation. Practice waiting, listening, and responding.



Manners Please!

Rule #8: Help with cleaning up. This is a great way to show gratitude after a meal.



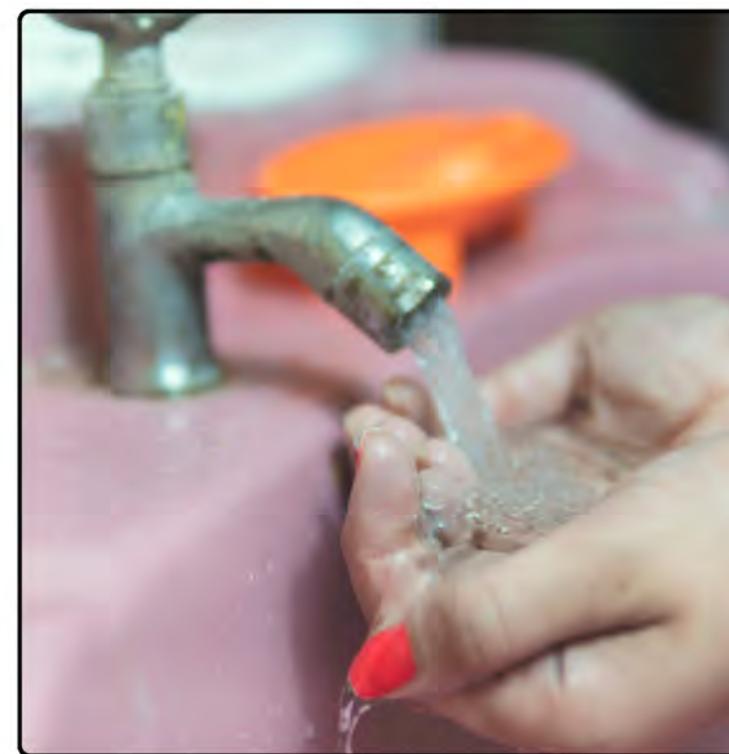
Manners Please!

Conclusions: Think About It!

What is important when washing hands?



use soap



use warm water



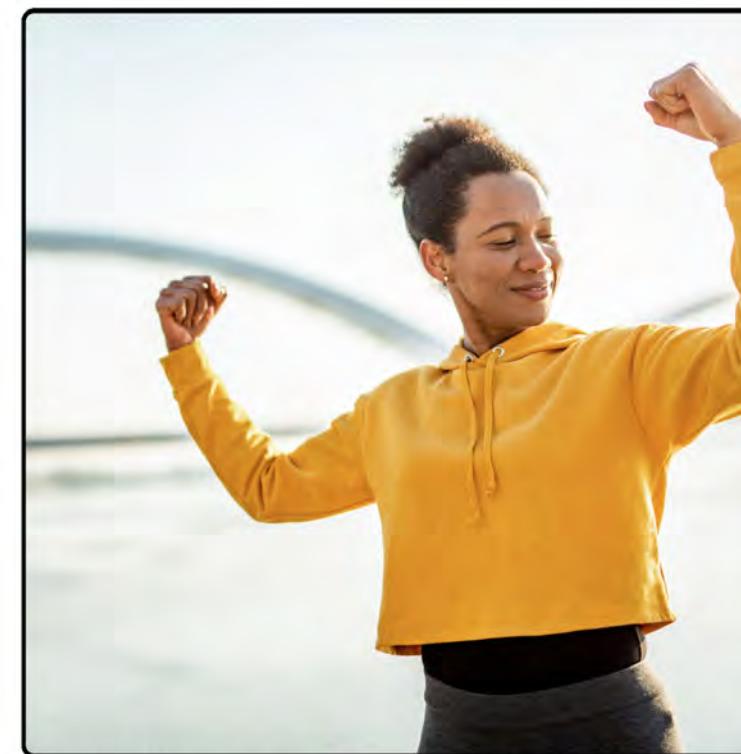
wash for 20 seconds

Conclusions: Think About It!

Why is it important to follow the rules when eating?



Helps us be respectful



Helps us stay healthy



Help us enjoy the meal

Thanks for reading with us!



For additional books, recipes, AAC and Special Education products, please visit our website & AACchicks TPT Store!



Setting the Table



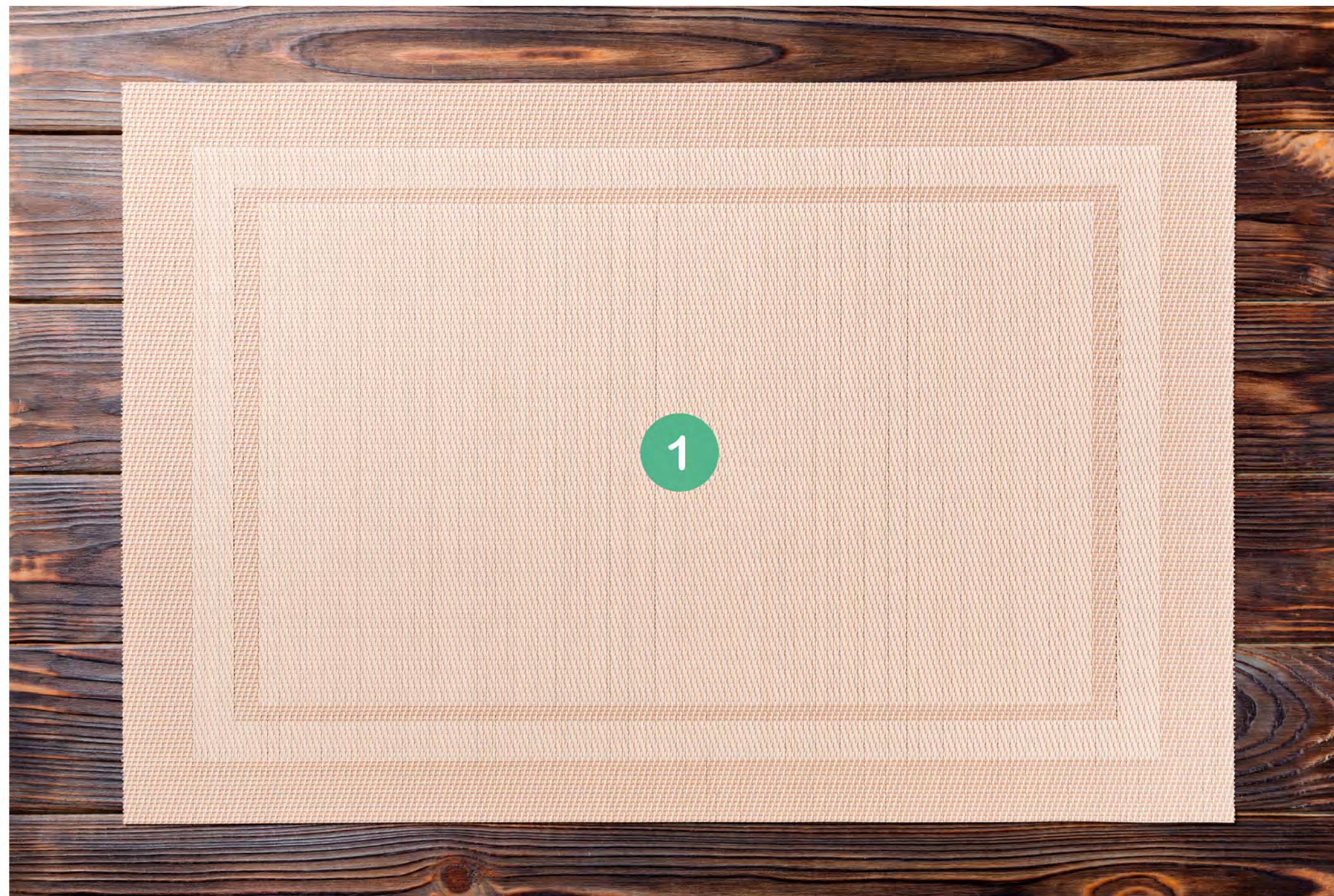
Setting the table is more than just putting out plates and forks. It's a way to get ready for a meal, show respect for others, and create a welcoming space where everyone feels included.



Let's learn how to set the table together!



Step 1: Put the placemats on the table. Make sure to have one for everyone.



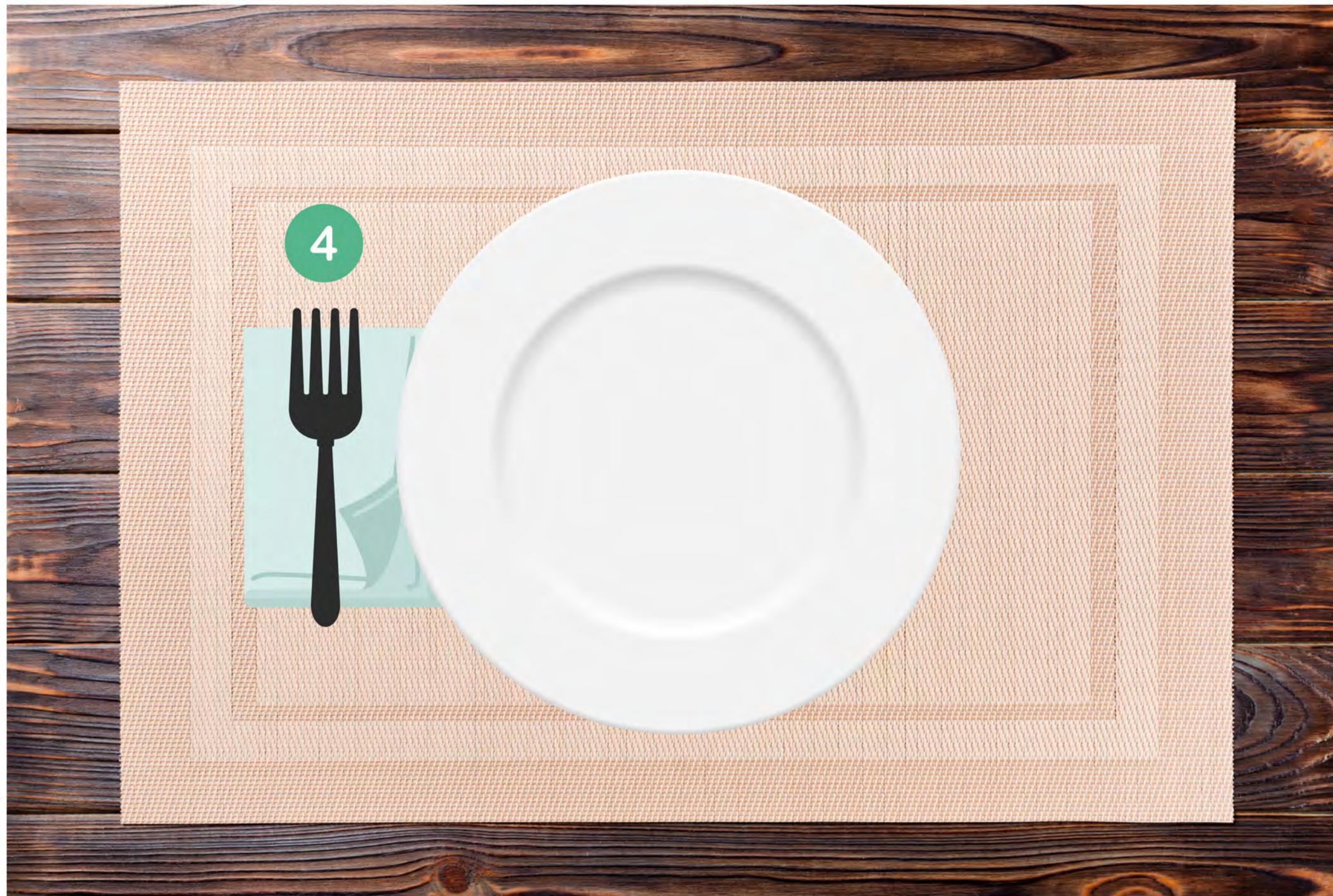
Step 2: Put a plate in the middle of the placemat.



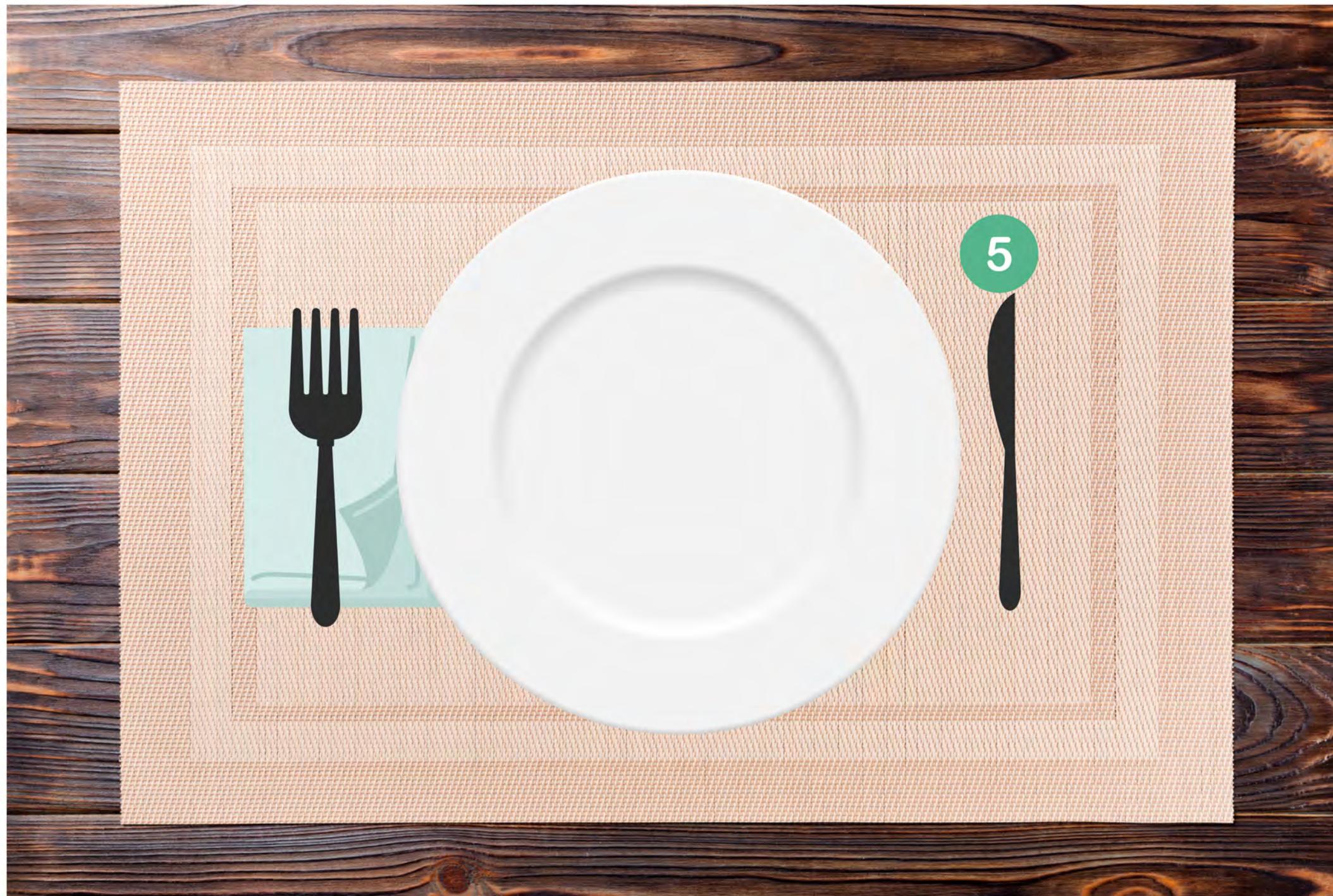
Step 3: Put a napkin on the left side of the plate.



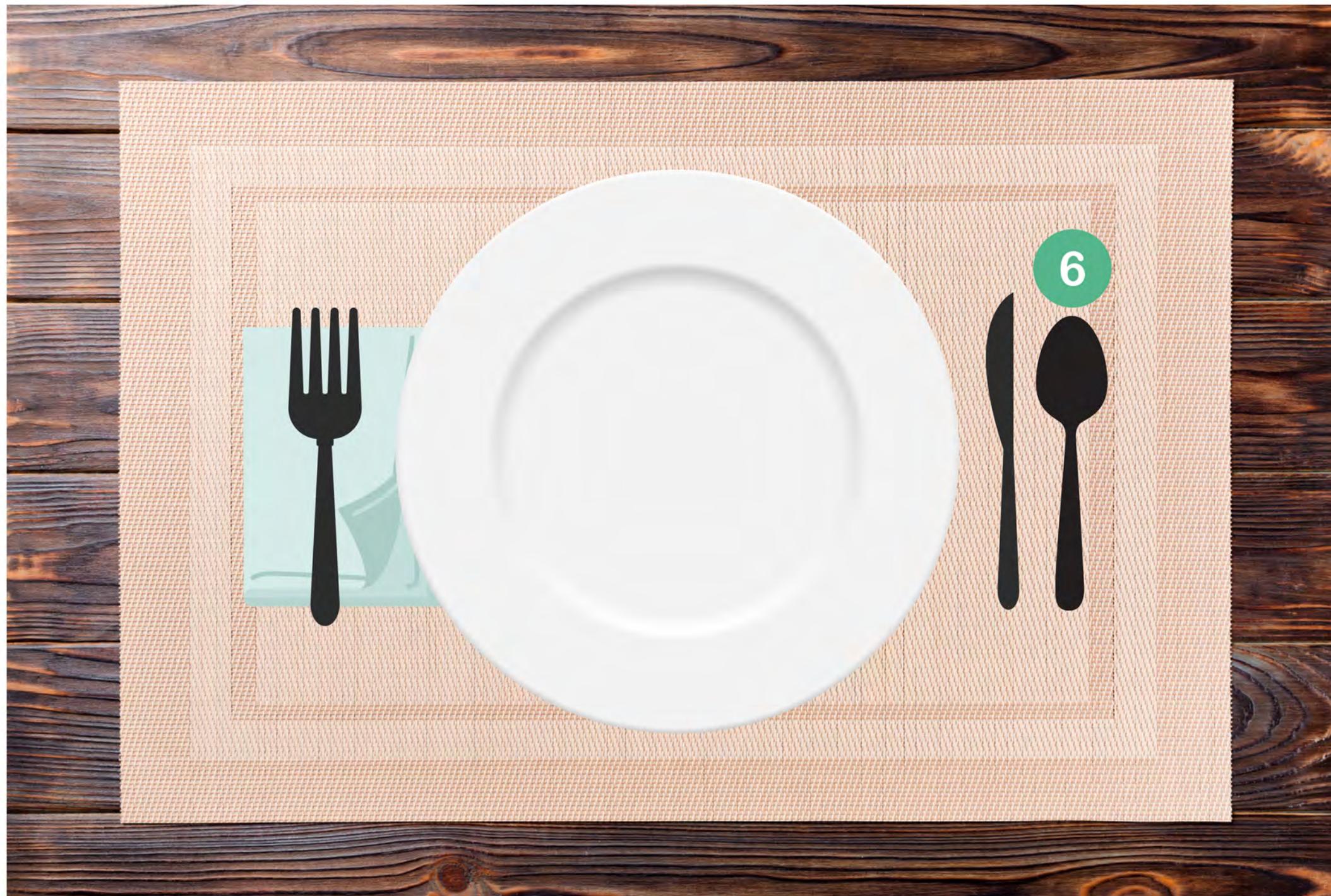
Step 4: Put the fork on top of the napkin.



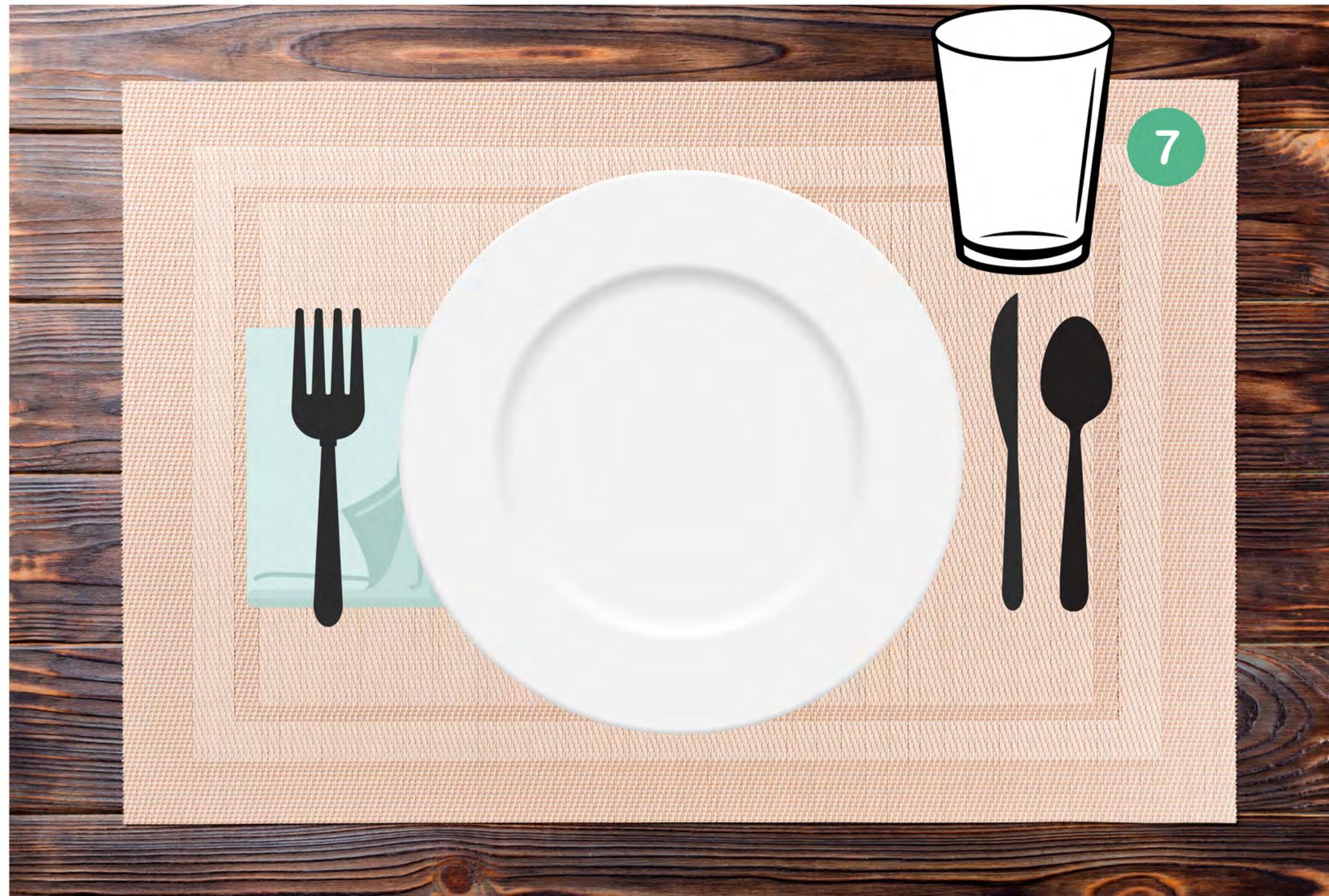
Step 5: Put the knife on the right side of the plate.



Step 6: Put the spoon next to the knife.



Step 7: Put the cup above the knife and spoon.



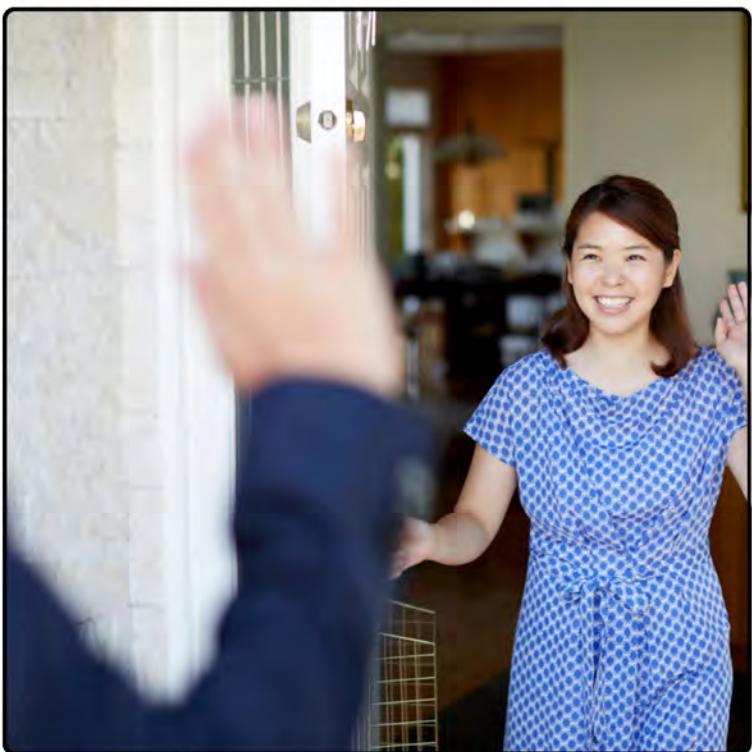


You did it! You learned how to set a table that is a welcoming space where everyone has a seat at the table.

Don't forget to help with clean up when everyone is finished eating.

Conclusions: Think About It!

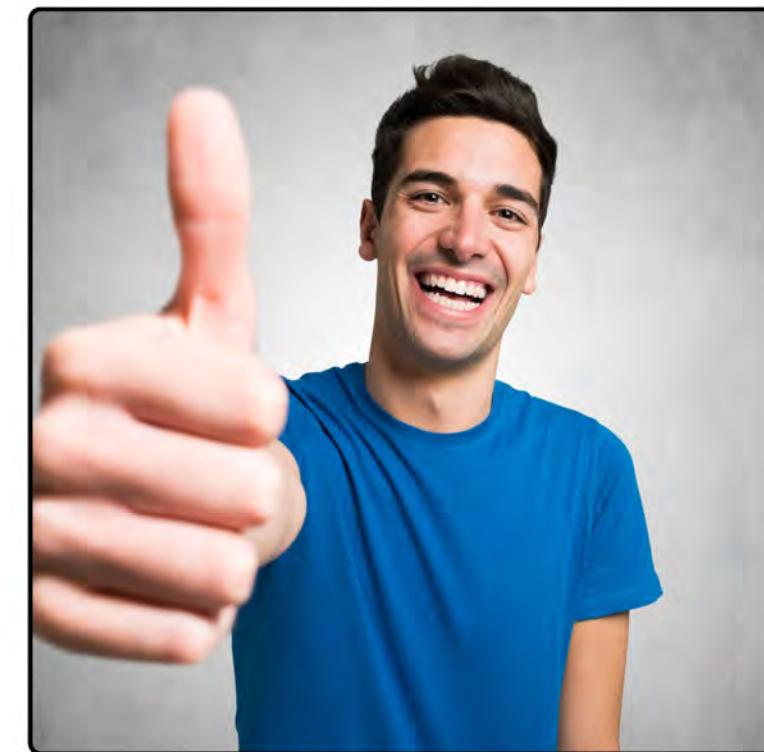
Why is setting the table important?



**makes people feel
welcomed**



it looks nice



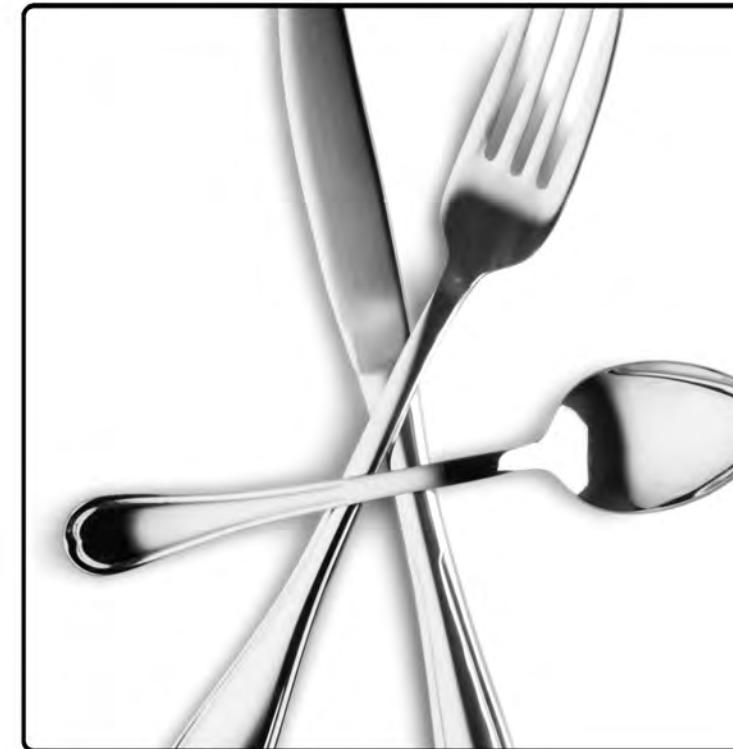
a good skill to have

Conclusions: Think About It!

What items should be on the table?



plates and bowls



utensils



napkins

Conclusions: Think About It!

What should you do when everyone is finished eating?



wipe table



put away food



wash dishes

Thanks for reading with us!



For additional books, recipes, AAC and Special Education products, please visit our website & AACchicks TPT Store!





Setting the Table

Put placemat on table.



Put plate in middle of placemat.



Put napkin left of plate.



Put fork on napkin



Put knife to right of plate.



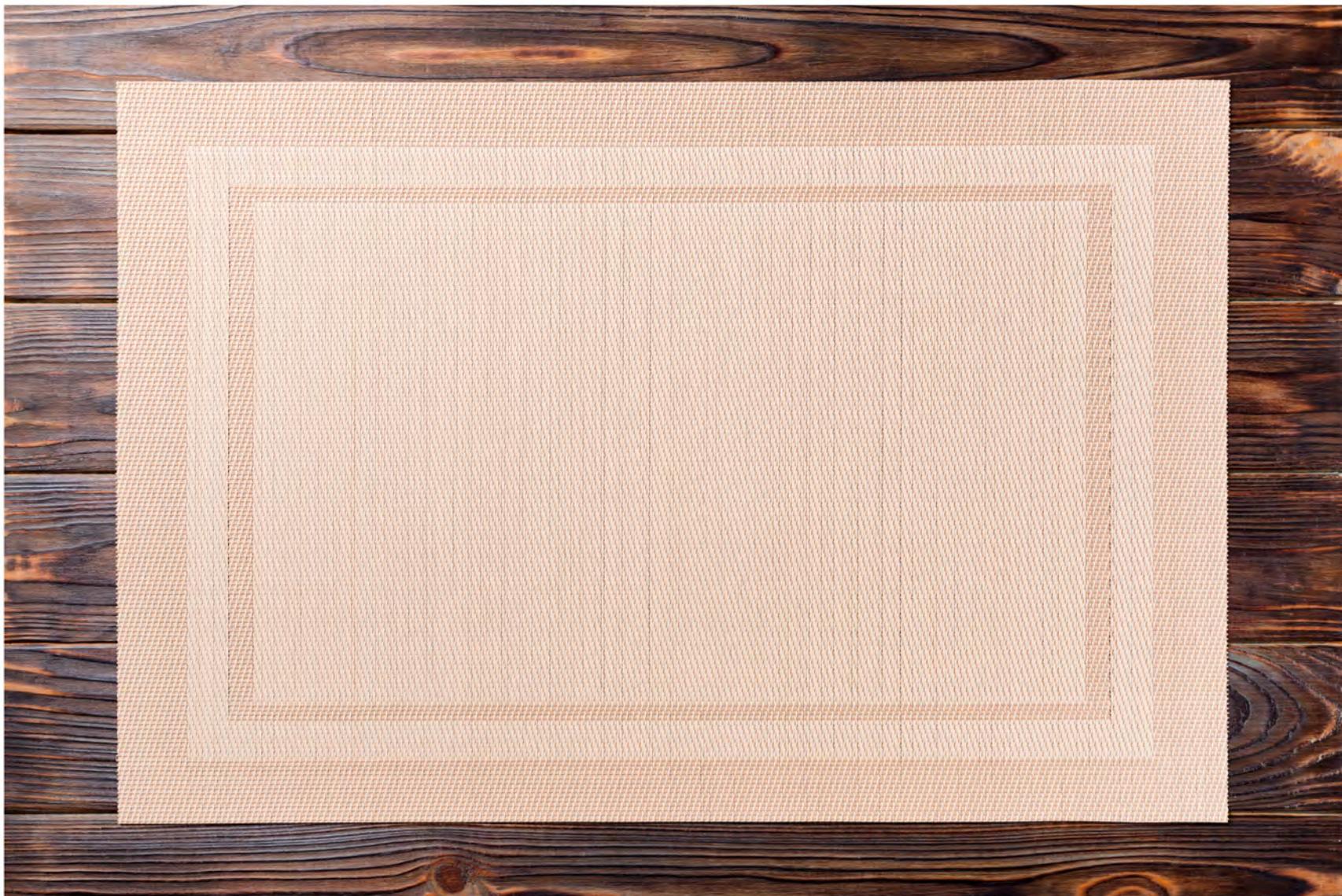
Put spoon to right of knife.

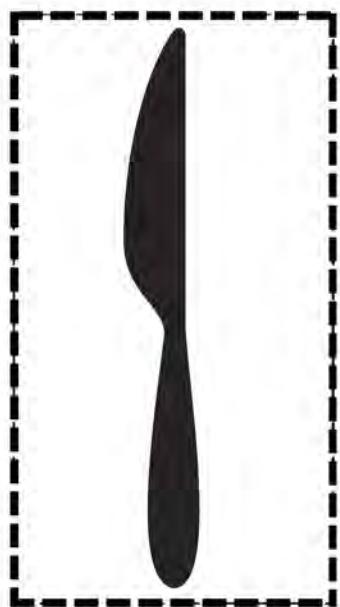
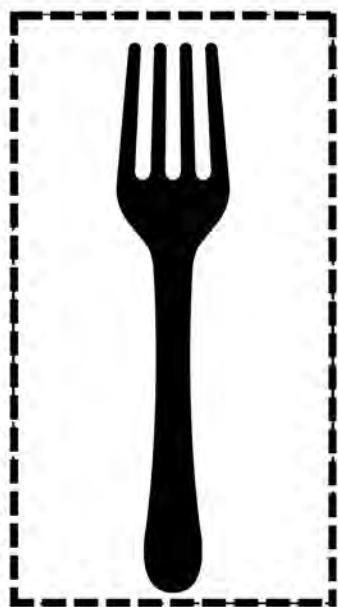


Put bowl on top of plate.



Set the table.





Mealtimes Conversation Ideas

Cut apart the Mealtimes Conversation Idea cards and place them in the middle of the table. Students can draw a card to help get a conversation started.

MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What makes you feel happy?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is something you're
looking forward to this week?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is the latest movie you
watched? Did you like it?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is something funny that
happened today?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is your favorite animal and
why?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is your favorite thing to do
on the weekend?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What makes you feel sad?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What is your favorite book?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

Do you have a pet? If so, tell me about him/her.



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What do you want to be when you grow up?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What is your superpower?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

Do you have a funny joke to tell?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

If you had \$100 dollars, what would you do with it?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What is your favorite holiday?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is something that makes
you mad?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**Do you have a favorite ice cream
flavor?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

What hobbies do you have?



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**If you could meet anyone in the
world, who would it be?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**Do you have any brothers or
sisters?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**What is your favorite outside
activity?**



MEALTIME CONVERSATION
IDEA

**Who is your favorite song artist?
What song do they sing?**





Eating Etiquette

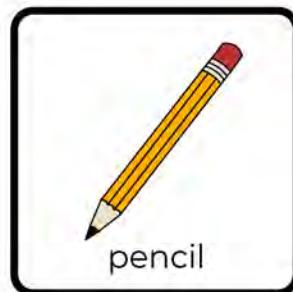
Circle the correct answer.

Name: _____

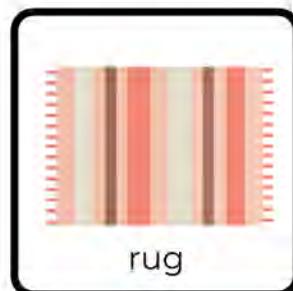
1. What should you do before sitting down for a meal?



2. What should you use to eat spaghetti?



3. What do you use to wipe your mouth while eating?



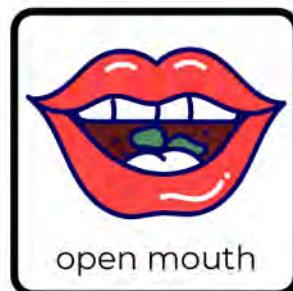
4. How should you chew food?



closed mouth



upside down



open mouth

5. Where should you sit to eat a meal?



bathroom



bean bag chair



table

6. What should you do when you are finished eating?



clean up



watch TV



take a nap

7. Grabbing food from someone else's' plate is _____.



good

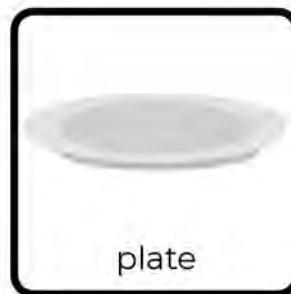
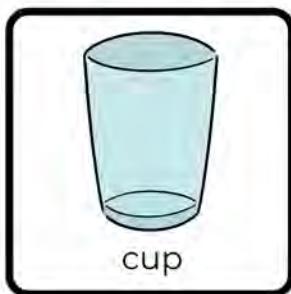


rude



funny

8. What goes in the middle of the placemat?



9. What should you use to eat soup?



10. What should you do during table conversation?

