

4-H Table Setting Contest Procedures and Guidelines

The Table Setting Contest is open to all 4-H members ages 5–18 — participants need not be enrolled in a specific project.

Registration forms and a list of rules are available from the Bradford County Extension Office.

Participants select a theme and display one place setting, including table covering, dishes, glassware, silverware, centerpiece and menu.

Why participate in the Table Setting Contest? It is a fun way to learn to:

- properly set a table
- plan nutritious meals
- express originality and creativity in choosing a theme
- present to the judge
- express knowledge of food, nutrition and food safety

The contest is divided into divisions, Cloverbud (ages 5 to 8) Junior (ages 8–11), Intermediate (12–14) and Senior (ages 15–18).

This is a county contest only — there is no state contest.



Guidelines in Creating Your Table Setting

Do you know that you can be a designer each time you set the table? A designer chooses and arranges things according to a plan for beauty and order. A neat, interesting, clean and attractive table setting makes any meal more enjoyable.

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 Contest, one place setting is to be displayed. Include table covering, dinnerware, stemware, flatware, centerpiece and menu. **DO NOT PREPARE FOOD.** You **MUST** bring 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).

Select a 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 would not be appropriate for a formal dinner. Flatware and dishware must be safe to eat from i.e., no glitter, glue, etc. is to be used on eating surfaces.

Table Covering — This is the background 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 served. **(Only one cover/ place setting is needed for the purposes of the contest.)**

- 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 (silver, plastic, etc.) on the left about one inch from the plate and 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.
- Napkins folded into oblongs are placed next to the forks with the fold to the left so it opens like book. Decorative and creative folds are encouraged. Placement of the napkin may vary.
- The first beverage glass is placed about one inch above the tip of the knife. If serving more than one beverage, place additional glass(es) to the right of 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 handle pointing to the right.
- Salad, bread and/or dessert plate(s) — or bowl(s) — may be placed at the top of the fork(s).
- When selecting your cover, include a dish for each course. Placement may vary according to how and when food is served.

Centerpiece — The centerpiece should be coordinated with the table appointment and be appropriate for the occasion. Even though a single place setting is set, the centerpiece should be visible to all as if the entire table was set and should not obstruct anyone's view of each other. 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 ChooseMyPlate.gov to plan nutritious meals. Participants are encouraged to develop interesting and creative menus. For example, you might name a food to fit your theme. *NOTE: The use of alcoholic beverages in any menu will disqualify table setting.*

Attire — Participant's attire should correspond with the theme/ occasion of their table setting. Participants may come dressed or change in one of the restrooms.

At the Contest --- The judges spend 5 to 10 minutes with each participant.

Judging & Interview — 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 judges as your guests. *You should extend a welcome to your guests and present your ideas behind your theme, choice of menu, food preparation and food handling. You should also demonstrate an understanding of table setting techniques.* Following your presentation, be prepared to answer any questions your guests may have. You should be able to describe the ingredients and preparation required for all menu items, as well as food safety. After your interview, return to the participant waiting area.

Writing the Menu --- The menu should be displayed on a 4x6 or larger on your choice of medium (index card, ceramic tile, chalkboard, etc.) printed or typed by the participant. You may decorate and/or prop up the menu.

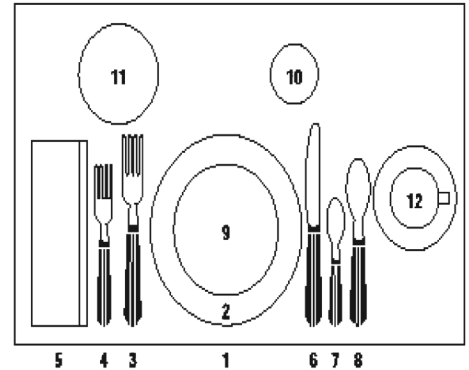
- 1) List the foods in the order in which they are served. Group foods served in one course. Use single line spacing between food items and a double line spacing between courses.
- 2) Use CAPITALS at the beginning of all words except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Correct spelling is important.
- 3) When an item on the menu has an accompaniment:
 - place the main item to the left and the accompaniment to the right,
 - or you may center the main item and write the accompanying item underneath,
 - or place both on the same line below.
- 4) 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.
- 5) List each food with the exception of butter, cream, sugar, or salad dressing, unless it is something special, such as Honey Butter or Poppyseed Dressing.
- 6) List beverages last.
- 7) Plan the spacing and arrangement of the items on the menu so that the written menu is symmetrical.
- 8) Consider creativeness when choosing names of menu items (except for formal menus). Formal menus must use original names of items. Ex. using Patriotic Punch for a 4th of July theme and Cherry Punch for a formal theme.

Every menu will not include all the foods listed below:

Appetizer
Main Dish
Starchy Vegetable
Other Vegetable
Salad
Bread
Dessert
Beverage

The following rules for setting a table correspond to the numbers seen in the table setting illustration below.

- The flatware, plate, and napkin should be one inch from the edge. (1)
- The plate is always in the center of the place setting. (2)
- The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate. (3)
- If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork. (4)
- 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.(5)
- The knife is placed to the right of the plate with the sharp blade facing in towards the plate.(6)
- The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife. (7)
- If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon. (8)
- The soup bowl may be placed on the dinner plate. (9)
- The drinking glass is placed at the tip of the knife. (10)
- If salad, bread and/or dessert plate(s) — or bowl(s) — is/are used, place at the top of the fork(s). (11)
- The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoons. (12)



Note: Only the utensils needed are placed on the table.

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

COLOR

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

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
- 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

TEXTURE

- Too many soft foods
- Too many chewy foods
- Too many crispy or crunchy foods Lack of variety in texture
- Too many mixtures
- Too many small pieces of the same size and shape
- Too many similar shapes
- Lack of variety in shape

