

# Place Settings

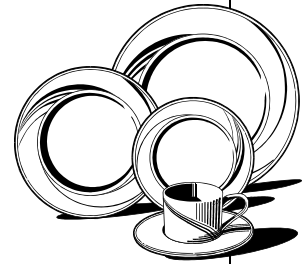


## Place Settings

The purpose of a place setting is to make the act of eating easier. A properly set table helps guests feel more at ease.

Table setting depends on:

- What food will be served
- How many persons will be seated
- What the table covering will be



Common sense tells us that a proper place setting provides the necessary utensils for eating a meal and that they will be placed in convenient positions for use. Table appointments need not be expensive, but all items should be clean and dishes and glassware should be free of cracks and chips.

A *cover* is another name for a place setting. It consists of a combination of flatware, dishes, glasses, and linens that are appropriate for the foods served. A cover is approximately 20 to 24 inches long by 15 inches deep. It is the individual's place at the table.

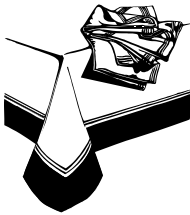
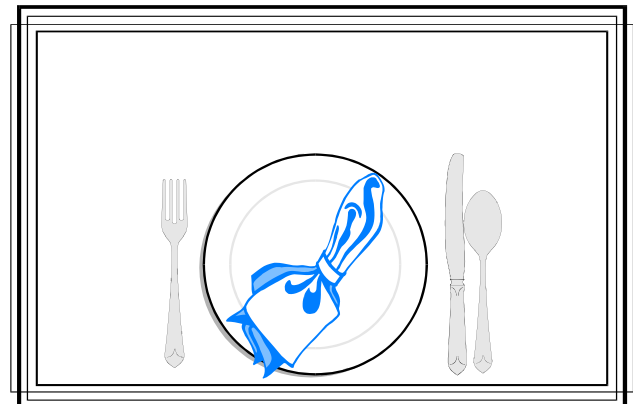
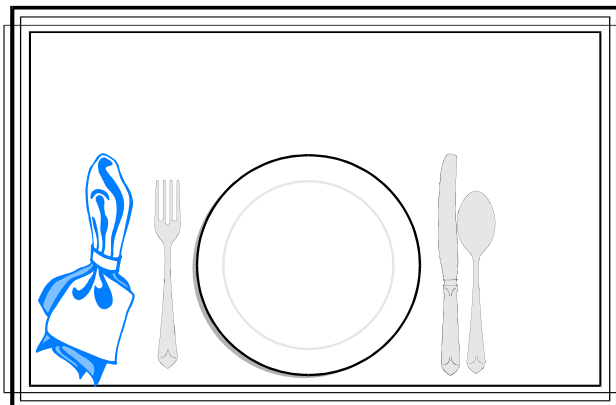


Table linens may be napkins, place mats, table-cloths or runners. It is not necessary to have a mat or cloth on your table if the surface will not be damaged by heat, water or abrasion.

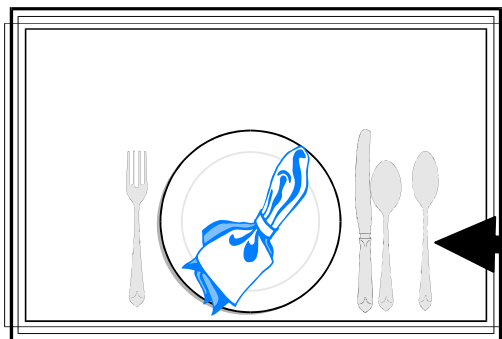
The flatware, napkin and plate for each cover are placed as though they belonged together, about one inch from the edge of the table. The plate forms the center, with the spoon and the knife on the right and the fork on the left. The cutting edge of the knife should face the plate. The bowl of the spoon and the tines of the fork are up.

### Basic Place Settings:

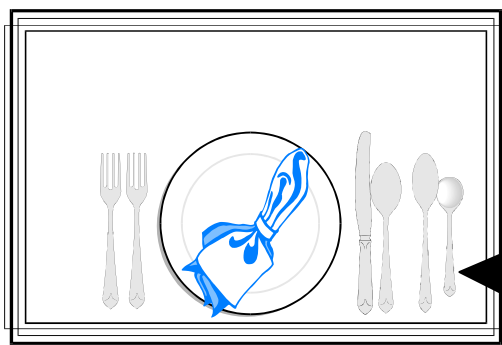


## New Mexico 4-H Consumer Decision Making Classes R-2006

Flatware is placed in order of its use. Pieces that are used first go on the outside and those that are used last are placed nearest the plate.

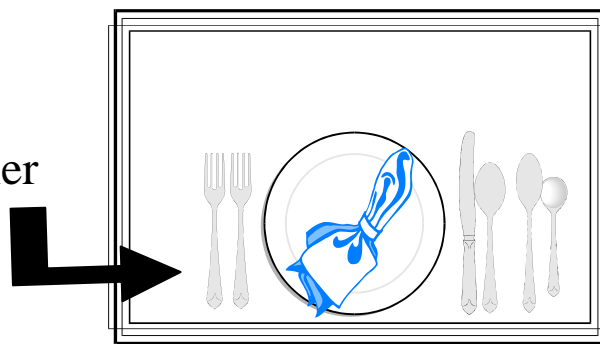


If you are serving iced tea, the teaspoon goes to the right of the other spoons.

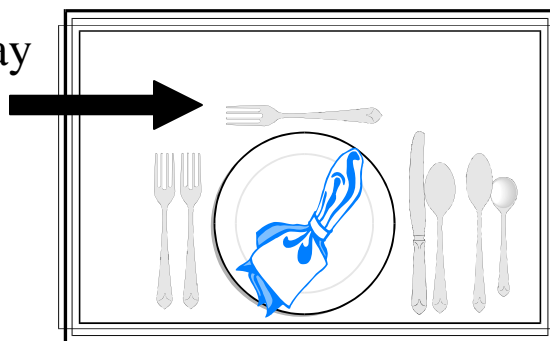


If a soup spoon is used, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.

If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.

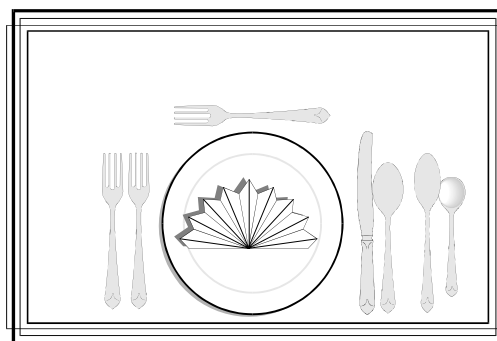
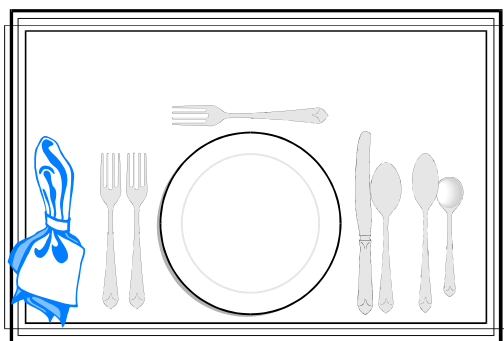
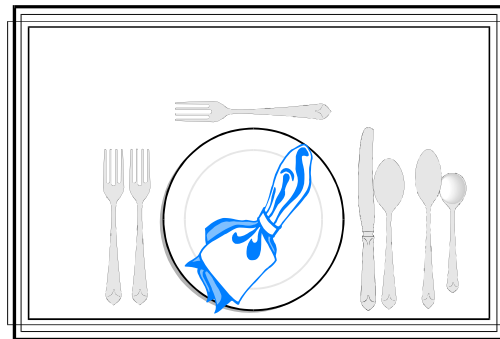


Flatware for dessert may or may not be placed on the table when the table is set. Commonly dessert utensils are placed above the dinner plate.

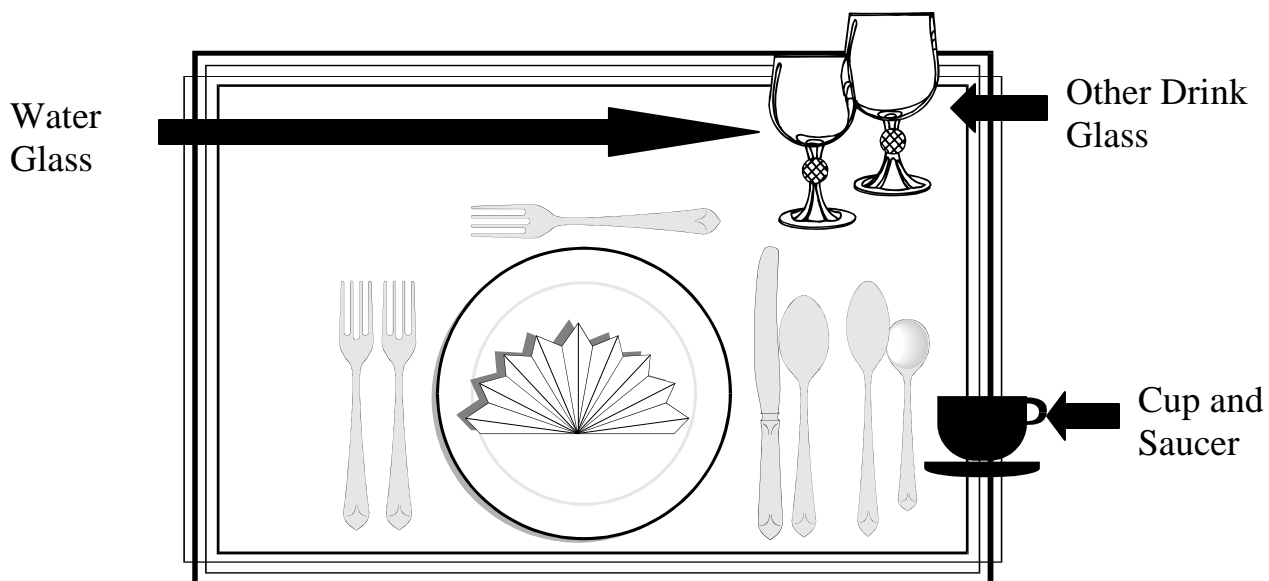


## New Mexico 4-H Consumer Decision Making Classes R-2006

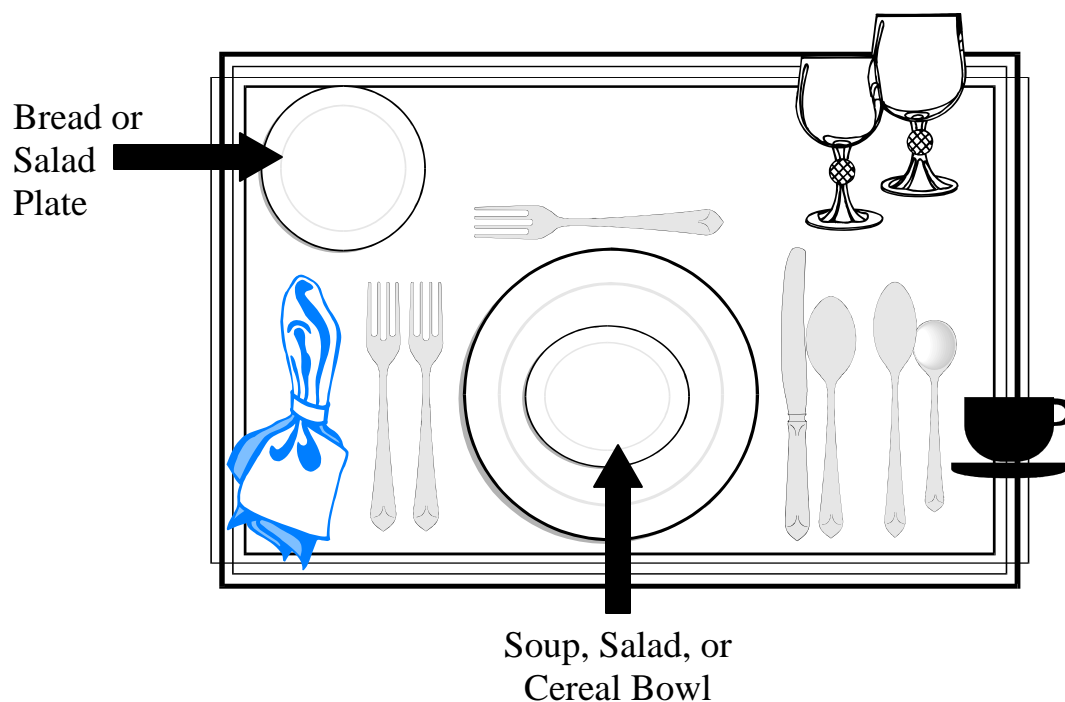
Usually the napkin is laid at the left of the fork. However when covers are close together, it can be placed in the center of the plate. Place the napkin so that the open corner is at either the lower right or lower left, whichever gives the better appearance. Traditional position is to have the open corner at the lower right. Napkins can also be rolled and placed in a napkin ring. Position it as you would a folded napkin.



The glass for water is placed at the tip of the knife; the glass for other drinks to the right of the water glass and a little nearer the edge of the table. Drinks always go to the right, just remember: Drink starts with “DR” which stands for “drink right”. The cup and saucer are placed to the right of the spoons. The handle of the cup points a little to the right of the edge of the table so that the guest can take hold of it without turning the cup.



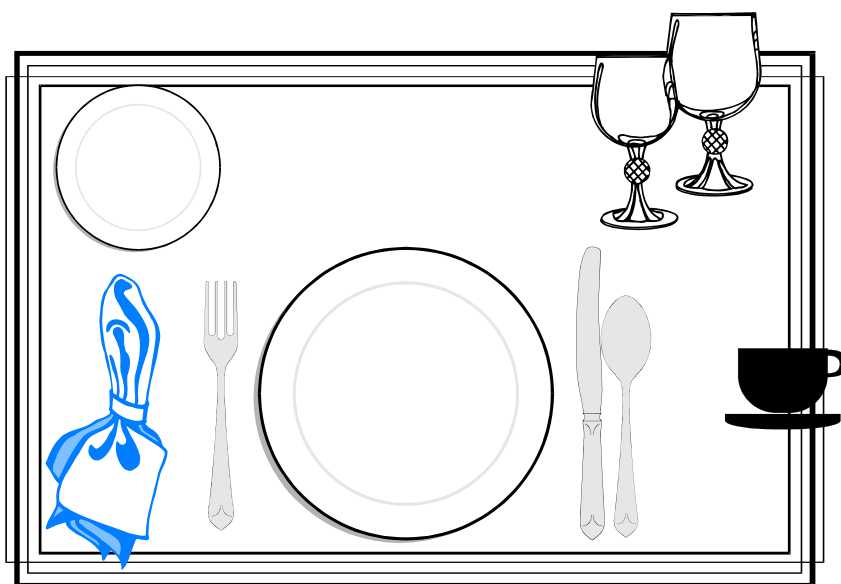
## New Mexico 4-H Consumer Decision Making Classes R-2006



Place a soup or cereal bowl on a plate. When a bread-and-butter plate is used, place it a little to the left of the tip of the fork. A single salad plate may be placed there or to the left of the fork. The additional plate should be directly opposite the drink glasses, so again, remember: Plate starts with "PL" which stands for "plate left". Bowls and plates used for early courses in the meal may be placed in the center of the dinner plate.

### **A cover ready for use.**

Napkin  
Fork  
Plate  
Knife  
Spoon  
Glass of water  
Glass of milk  
Cup and saucer, or mug  
Bread and butter plate

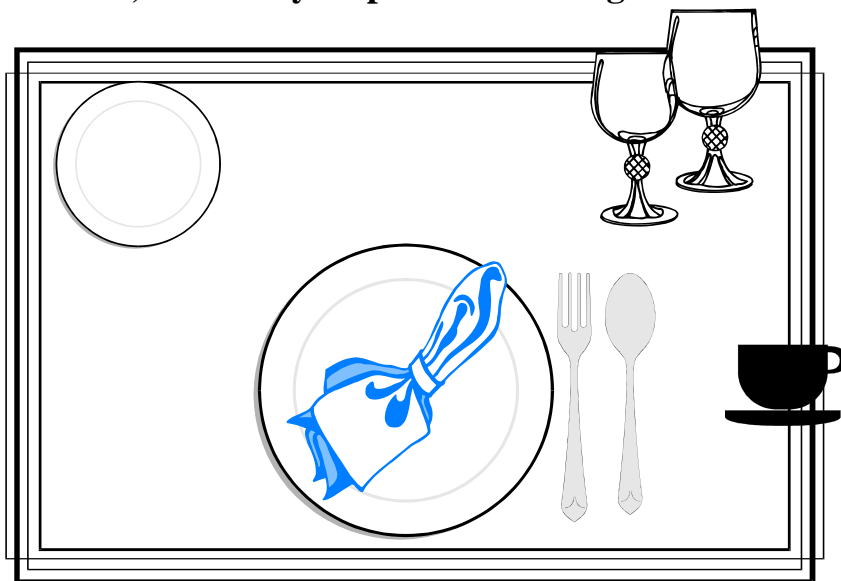


## New Mexico 4-H Consumer Decision Making Classes R-2006

Only the flatware that will be needed for the meal should be placed on the table. If the menu does not call for knives, forks may be placed at the right of the plate. Note the following illustrations.

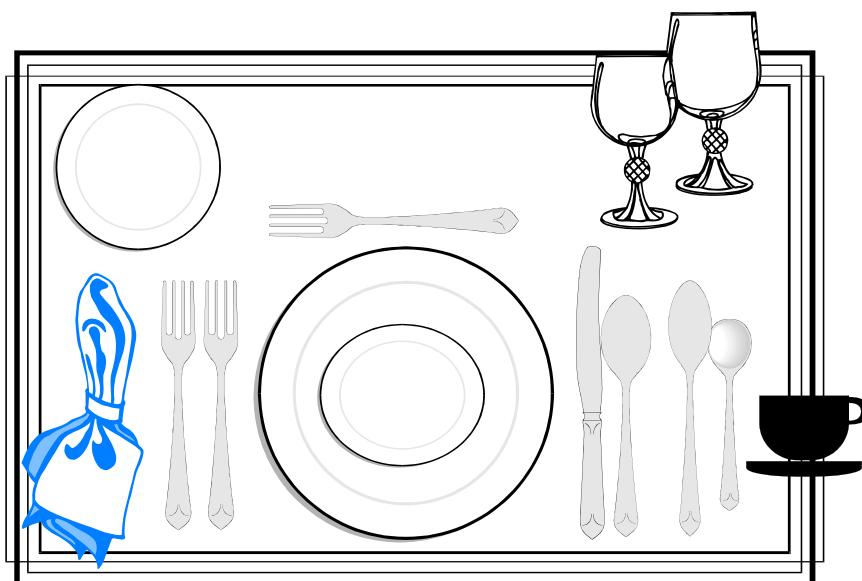
**If the menu does not call for knives, forks may be placed at the right of the plate.**

Napkin  
Fork  
Plate  
Spoon  
Glass of water  
Glass of milk  
Cup and saucer, or mug  
Bread and butter plate



**More courses call for more dishes in the cover. Consider all the foods to be served and what is needed based on the menu.**

Napkin  
Rolls (Bread Plate)  
Water (Water Glass)  
Iced Tea (Tea Glass  
& Tea Spoon)  
Soup (Soup Bowl and  
Soup Spoon)  
Salad (Salad Plate  
and Salad Fork)  
Main Course (Dinner  
Plate, Fork, Knife,  
Spoon)  
Dessert (Dessert Fork  
or Spoon)  
Coffee (Cup and Saucer)



Turner, 2006

## Guidelines for 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. Select and make one food from your menu. You **MUST** bring a standard size card table for the display.

**Select a Theme** - What is the occasion...a family dinner, a holiday, or lunch with friends? Is this a casual or formal occasion? Select a theme which fits the occasion. Possibilities can run from a casual fishing party sack lunch to a formal Mother's Day dinner.

- Formal — use candles (lit only while being judged), more than three pieces of flatware, china (no stoneware), tablecloth and/or mats are acceptable and cloth napkins.
- Casual — be creative! Theme can be indoors or outdoors. Use any type of cover (tablecloth, paper, etc.) and any type of table service. Overall place setting should be an expression of your creativity; homemade touches are encouraged.

**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.

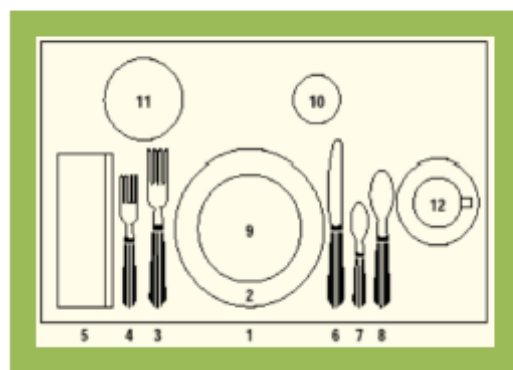
**Table Covering** - This is the background for the food and table appointments placed on it. It protects the table and makes for less noise. Placemats and/or

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 of space 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.

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

1. The flatware, plate, and napkin should be one inch from the edge of the table.
2. The plate is always in the center of the place



setting.

3. The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate.
4. If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.
5. 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.
6. The knife is placed to the right of the plate with the sharp blade facing in towards the plate.
7. The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.
8. If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.
9. The soup bowl may be placed on the dinner plate.
10. The drinking glass is placed at the tip of the knife.
11. If salad, bread and/or dessert plate(s) — or bowl(s) — is used, place at the top of the fork(s).
12. 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.

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



**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 can be purchased or arranged by the exhibitor. Centerpiece candles are only to be lit while being judged.

### Tips and Reminders for Setting a Table

- The table should be clean; it can be left bare or a table covering can be used as the background for the food and the items may be placed on top of it. A table covering helps protect the table and muffles the noise of clanking glassware and dishes.
- Placemats or tablecloths can be used for special occasions.
- Dinnerware and flatware should be chosen as appropriate for the occasion and that complement each other. Matching or blended colors or textures in the dishes or contrast something different make a table setting look attractive.
- Table setting items should be appropriate for the meal served. Snacks on paper plates are appropriate while a home-cooked dinner should be served on attractive dishes to help show it off.
- Only the utensils needed are placed on the table.
- The centerpiece should be attractive. Simple ones, such as fresh flowers, a plant, or fruit can be used. If candles are used, they should be of the length so that if they were lit, they would be above eye level.
- The centerpiece should be low enough so that the people at the table can see over it; it should be colorful and blend with the tablecloth and the dishes; and be fresh and clean looking.

**Menu Planning** - An appropriately planned menu should follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate. As a general guideline, a meal should have at

least three different food groups to help balance what the body needs every day to get all the nutrients needed. MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet using a familiar image—a place setting for a meal. For more information about MyPlate, go to [www.choosemyplate.gov/](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/).



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. Breakfast, party, and picnic menus should contain two or three food groups. Other meals should contain five food groups. 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 the table setting.

### Common Errors in Menu Planning

#### COLOR

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

#### TEXTURE

- Too many soft foods
- Too many chewy foods
- Too many crispy or crunchy foods
- Lack of variety in texture

#### SIZE

- Too many mixtures
- Too many small pieces of the same size and shape
- Too many similar shapes
- Lack of variety in shape

#### 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

#### 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



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.



## Writing the Menu

The menu should be displayed on any medium of choice (card, ceramic tile, chalkboard, etc.) printed or typed by the exhibitor. The menu may be decorated and/or propped up. The following guidelines are suggested when writing or planning a menu:

- Menus should be written in symmetrical arrangement on the page with the foods listed in the order they are served. (Every menu will not include all the foods listed here.)

Appetizer  
Main Dish  
Starchy Vegetable  
Other Vegetables  
Salad  
Bread  
Dessert  
Beverage

- Foods should be grouped by courses. Extra spacing should be allowed between courses.
- Descriptive terms should be used that give information about the temperature, texture, color, or other special characteristics of the food or method of preparation such as *Chilled Apple Cider*, *Broiled Sirloin Steak*, *Cream of Asparagus Soup*
- Words should be capitalized except articles and prepositions. Words such as *or*, *and*, *of*, *with*, etc. should not be capitalized.
- Foods served with an accompaniment should have the food listed first.

*Baked Potato Sour Cream*  
*OR*  
*Cheddar Cheese Cubes*  
*Rye Chips*

- When the main dish has two or more accompaniments, the main dish should be centered on one line and the accompaniments should be on the same line on either side or written on the line below.

*Rye Crisp Chicken Soup Saltines*  
*OR*  
*Chicken Soup*  
*Rye Crisp Saltines*

- Butter, cream, sugar, or salad dressings are not written on the menu unless they are special in some way such as *Whipped Butter* or *Thousand Island Dressing*
- The beverage(s) should be listed last.
- The following is an example of how a three-course meal is properly written:

*French Onion Soup*  
*Whole Wheat Wafers*  
*Celery Sticks Assorted Olives*

*Prime Rib of Roast Beef au Jus*  
*Potato Soufflé*  
*Asparagus with Hollandaise Sauce*  
*Mixed Green Salad*  
*Hot Rolls Whipped Butter*

*Lemon Ice*  
*Coffee Hot Tea*



## Dining Etiquette

### Posture

- Place personal items (purse, hat, gloves) in a place other than on the table.
- Sit up straight with arms and elbows off the table.
- All four legs of your chair should rest on the floor.
- Don't fidget or squirm.
- Ask for items to be passed rather than reach across the table.
- Hats and caps are to be removed upon entering a building.

### Table Service

- Hold flatware between thumb and forefinger.
- Avoid gesturing with your flatware.
- Use the flatware from the outside first.
- After using a fork, knife or spoon, place it on the plate. Never lay a used utensil on the table.
- Service is from the left and dishes are passed to the right.
- Place the napkin in your lap. When leaving the table, place the napkin to the left of your plate.



### While Eating

- Chew quietly with your mouth closed. Avoid slurping soup or noodles.
- Butter bread one bite at a time.
- Cut meat one bite at a time.
- Dip soup spoon into the bowl using a motion that moves the spoon away from you.
- Remove alien objects from your mouth with your fingers and place them on the side of your plate.
- Avoid talking with a full mouth. Take small bites.
- If the food is too hot, wait for it to cool rather than blowing on it.
- Take small portions at buffets. You may return for seconds.
- Keep table conversation pleasant and at a low volume.
- Discuss appropriate subjects at the table. Include all diners in the conversation.

### Finishing the Meal

- When you have finished eating, leave your plate and other service items where they are. Place the fork and knife on the plate resting next to each other with the tines and blade toward the middle of the plate.

- Don't pick your teeth at the table.
- Don't fuss with hair or makeup at the table. Excuse yourself to the restroom for repairs.

## Social Occasions

**Being a Good Host** - As the host, you are responsible for issuing invitations in a timely manner and having the event well organized so you can also enjoy the party. The host makes sure that all of the guests are greeted and introduced to the people they do not know. When you are hosting a social event, it's your job to make sure that all of your guests are comfortable and are having a reasonably good time. The host is in charge of the conversation and makes sure that it stays at an acceptable level. Be sure that everyone is included in the conversation. Avoid crude and hurtful jokes as well as vulgar topics that may be offensive.

**Being a Good Guest** - When you receive an invitation, you must respond in a timely manner. Arrive within a few minutes of the designated time. Try not to arrive too early. Arriving "fashionably late" is not fashionable at all. If a meal is being served, it might be ruined by your tardiness. As a guest, it's your responsibility to be respectful and pleasant. Make an effort to visit with everyone at the party.

**RSVP** - RSVP is the abbreviation for the French phrase *repondez s'il vous plait* which means *please reply*. If an invitation requests an RSVP, it is your responsibility to reply in a timely manner in the fashion the host indicates. This may be by returning an enclosed card, making a phone call or sending an email. A response is for the host's convenience, not yours. This helps the host know how many people to plan for, especially if food will be served or if space is an issue.

**Thank You Notes** - Following the party, you should phone the host or write a short thank you note expressing your appreciation of the time you spent with them. It is appropriate to return the invitation within a month or so. Thank you notes should also be sent when you receive a gift even if you have given a verbal thank you at the time.



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# Fundraising

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## *Consumer Decision Making Contest Study Guide*

Fundraising events are a fun and exciting way to raise much needed money for your 4-H club. They are also a great way to raise community awareness about your cause, organization or non-profit. The selection of the right fundraiser to fit the organization is critical to its success. All club members must be involved in planning and carrying out a successful fundraiser.



To help ensure your fundraising event is a winner, the following components should be incorporated into your planning:

- 1. Purpose**

What is the purpose of your event? Of course, your main purpose is to raise money, but what else are you wanting to accomplish? Do you want to gain publicity for your 4-H club, establish new donors, engage 4-H alumni? It is important to determine the purpose of the event before detailed planning begins.

- 2. Goal**

Decide as a group fundraising goals. Each fundraising event you plan should be geared to raising a specific amount of money. The amount you choose should be what you hope to net, which is the amount you plan to raise after the expenses are deducted.

- 3. Select a fundraiser**

Look for the product or project that will raise the most dollars without being labor-intensive. Don't get involved in a project with "hidden" costs (shipping, prizes, etc.) that will eat up your profits. Be aware of other fundraisers in your community. You could be in competition with other organizations selling the same product.

- 4. Budget**

List all the expenses that will be required to conduct the fundraisers. Be sure to leave a little extra room for unforeseen costs.

- 5. Leadership**

Form committees to be responsible for different components of the fundraiser. Conduct regular check-ins to make sure everyone is completing tasks assigned.

- 6. Set-Up**

Plan the event set-up well in advance. Where will it be? Will food be served? Is there a bad weather plan? When can the event be set up?

## 7. Marketing

Just like a new product, it is important you market your fundraiser well in advance to your target audience. What tools are you going to use to market the event? Social media, direct mail, flyers, newspaper, radio, etc.

## 8. Thank you

One of the most often heard complaints from donors to charitable fundraising events is, “They never even said “thank you””. Make sure your club takes time to send thank-you notes to everyone who is involved with the event, including volunteers, contributors, event hosts and vendors. It is very important you keep your donors happy since you will probably be asking for another donation.



Fundraisers can be conducted in numerous forms. Examples of fundraisers range from selling bake goods and candy, walk/run/bike-a-thons, car washes, cash saving cards, raffles, spaghetti dinners and auctions, to running concessions, and grant writing. The amount of preparation, organization and manpower needed to execute the fundraisers are different for each one. So, how do you decide which one is best for your organization?

- **Entertainment coupon books, scratch-off cards and discount cards** are well known for their high profit margin that can easily reach 100%. One of the main pros when it comes to using such fundraising activities is the fact that they are quite easy to understand and even easier to use when compared to other ways of fund raising. However, they come with some cons as well. For instance, your organization will have to pre-purchase all the necessary items and try to estimate how many of them will be sold. So, you may end up with significant leftovers. Another con related to these types of fund-raising activities is the fact they are widely used by other organizations.

- **Bake sales and car washes** are very popular fundraising events. The main pro related to them is the fact that they can create a sense of community among all the participants. These events can usually be held with very little up-front expense and require a minimal planning commitment. However, they are usually not very lucrative if you are looking to raise a significant amount of money in a short period of time. If your club is considering a car wash, the most profitable method would be to pre-sale car wash tickets in advance. Advantages include:



- Having an estimate of how many people will attend the car wash
- More profit since 66% of the ticket buyers will not attend
- In the event of rain, you are not washed out.

- **Silent auctions and raffles** are popular as well when it comes to raising significant amounts of money. If you can auction or raffle some high value items, you will generate an increased interest in your participants, and this will turn out to be a profitable aspect for your organization. However, the cons related to silent auctions

and raffles include a huge amount of promotional and organizational work. You will also have to find the right site for your silent auction or raffle and deal with all the take-down and set-up tasks. Also, you will have to solicit donations for such fund-raising events and your volunteers may find this difficult to handle.

- **Walk/Run/Bike-a-Thons** are healthy fundraisers that brings families and communities together in a fun environment. Choose your sport and get moving. You can make almost any activity into a “thon”. Participants receive sponsorship for each mile, lap, etc. they walk, run or bike. Since “thons” are peer-to-peer fundraising events, participants reach out to their network of families and friends. Donors are more likely to give if they can put a face with the donation. “Thons” are easy to plan and generate moderate to high revenue.
- **Product Sales** are the most popular type of fundraiser for schools and small youth organizations. From cookies and doughnuts to candy bars and popcorn, product sale fundraisers are generally the first type of fundraiser organizations consider. Product sales are great solutions for meeting small fundraising needs. On the positive side, they can be done quickly and require little money up front. They are also easy to understand and implement. On the negative side, product sale fundraisers often raise far less than expected. They are usually not able to raise significant money to meet larger fundraising needs. For example, consider a typical \$1 profit on candy bars and the need to sell 2,500 candy bars just to raise \$2,500. Product sale fundraisers are also very expensive (typically costing 50¢ to 65¢ of every dollar raised), they tend to be over-priced for their value, and they are not able to attract new people to be involved in the host-charity or school organization...and unfortunately, they aren't very much fun.



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Activewear

# Activewear Study Guide

Sales of activewear are at an all-time high. According to the market research firm NPD Group, activewear sales generated \$35 billion and made up nearly 17% of the entire American clothing market in 2014. By 2018, that market share increased to 24%.

Activewear is clothing worn for sport or physical exercise and uses the latest in performance fabrics and technology to ensure that apparel can stand up to the intense demands of sporting disciplines like running, cycling, swimming, and gym-work. Activewear includes tops, shorts, tights, socks, jackets and so much more.

Brand-name activewear, including Under Armour, Nike, and Adidas, is popular with teens and adults. Private-label brands available in department and discount stores might be made of similar materials but cost less than the national brands. Most activewear is made from durable fabrics that can be laundered frequently and still provide long wear.

When selecting activewear, it is important to consider the type of activity you will participate in, activity impact level, your body type and if you will be using it indoors or outdoors. When choosing activewear, consider the fabric content. Choose activewear that contains cotton, cotton blends and moisture wicking fabrics that will assist with moisture absorbency, ventilation, and comfort.

The right activewear can enhance your training and performance. Fabric and fit are probably the most important factors when choosing activewear.

## **FABRIC**

Fabrics are designed for different purposes. Some fabrics pull sweat away from your skin and others absorb it. When it comes to workout clothes, some choices are better than others on your workout.

### **Wicking:**

Wicking fabrics are breathable synthetic fabrics that provide moisture control for an athlete's skin during a mid to high intensity workout. In essence, the fabric "wicks" the sweat away from your skin which can help it evaporate quickly and keep your body cool.

Wicking fabrics tend to be soft, lightweight and stretchy, making them an excellent choice for activewear. This broad category of fabrics is used to make garments like t-shirts, running and cycling jerseys, socks, and polo style shirts for any physical activity where the goal is to keep your skin as cool and dry as possible.

Moisture wicking fabrics are used to make apparel for outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, mountain biking, snow skiing and mountain climbing.

There are a number of products marketed for their wicking. Many of these products are used as a blend with each other or with cotton. Additionally, these products may be branded under a variety of names such as Dri-Fit, CoolMax, Vapor and Climalite.

- Polyester – polyester is the workhorse of the workout fabrics and is the one you see on labels most often. Basically plastic clothing, it's durable, wrinkle-resistant, lightweight, breathable and non-absorbent.
- Spandex – Also known as elastane and by the brand name Lycra, spandex puts the stretch in workout wear. The synthetic fabric can expand to nearly 600 percent of its size, offers an unrestricted range of motion, and then snaps back in place. Spandex is an anagram for expands.
- Emerging Performance Fabrics – The next big thing in activewear is products that provide even more benefits. Benefits include improved wicking, temperature control, UV protection and anti-odor properties. Bamboo is an example of a new, emerging performance fabric. These products may also be more expensive.

### **Cotton:**

Cotton can also be a good choice when choosing activewear. Cotton is breathable, soft, comfortable and natural fiber that works well for lighter workouts. Cotton also tends to be less expensive than synthetic activewear. However, cotton is very absorbent and is slow to dry. When wet, cotton holds the moisture next to your body.

### **FIT**

Choose activewear that fits your body and your workout. For example, if you are running or biking, avoid wide-leg or loose pants/leggings. Likewise, for activities such as yoga or Pilates, choose stretchy, fitted fabrics. Additionally, avoid fabrics that could chafe or irritate your skin during repetitive movement.

Pay close attention to fit more than size because some workout clothes tend to run smaller and more from fitting than regular clothes.

### **COST**

There are many factors to consider when shopping for activewear. You may be surprised at how much activewear costs. Paying the top dollar does not necessarily mean that you will get the best activewear for you. Be sure that whatever price you choose to pay for activewear that it is the right activewear for you and that it meets the needs you desire.

Information for this study guide was compiled, with permission, from:

- Texas 4-H Consumer Decision Making Categories and Descriptions Study Guide 2017-2018
- Choose Activewear for Comfort and Safety Factsheet – North Dakota State University, written by Linda Manikowske, Ph.D.

# Carry-On Luggage

## Carry-on Luggage and Personal Item Bags

Heading out on a trip? Looking to purchase luggage that meets all airline guidelines? There are lots of items to choose from. With high demands on luggage comes higher competition, which means innovation, creativity and lots of choices. To ensure that you get from point A to point B smoothly, choosing the best carry-on luggage will make travel less stressful. Be prepared by knowing the airline guidelines and be knowledgeable of available options.

**Carry-on bags** are convenient for air travel because it avoids the cost and hassle of checking a bag. The golden rule is that the bag must either fit under the seat or in the overhead bin. For domestic flights, your carry-on can be no larger than 22 inches high by 14 inches wide by 9 inches deep. (The maximum linear size is 45 inches, but none of the dimensions can exceed the measurements above.)

Measure the height of your luggage from the floor to the top of the handle in its lowered position — but even rule-abiding luggage is not a guarantee that your bags will not be relegated to the plane's underbelly, because the flight crew can impose further restrictions even after boarding has begun. Most airlines do not have a weight limit for carry-on luggage, and if they do most do not actually weigh carry-on bags. The exception is for small commuter planes.



Figure 1. Airline carry-on rules  
Consumerreports.com



Figure 2 Sample Personal Item  
<https://thewirecutter.com/guides/best-personal-item-carry-ons/>

**Personal item bags** must fit underneath the seat in front of you on the plane. This type of bag can include a backpack, laptop bag, tote bag, brief case or camera bag. But to get the most out your personal item, it is beneficial to buy a bag specifically for this purpose. For U.S. domestic flights, the measurement rules range from 18 X 8 X 14 inches to 17 X 9 X 10 inches, but there is no standard size for these bags. The size also varies based on the location of the seat on the same aircraft. A growing number of airlines offer a lowest-class base-price that only includes one personal item. A few items that are important when looking to purchase a personal item bag for air travel includes durability, organization and multiple carrying options.

When purchasing a new carry-on or personal item, it would be beneficial to look at one of the sites that includes the sizes and limits for multiple airlines. One such site is:  
<https://www.smartertravel.com/personal-item-vs-carry-on/>.

### Comparing Transportation Security Administration (TSA) vs. the Airlines

The airline will determine how large or heavy bags may be to be able to board a flight. TSA does not enforce any rules regarding luggage size and weight; therefore, just because it makes it through security does not mean it will make it on the plane. The job of TSA is to screen the contents of the luggage, not to approve or reject the luggage itself. All checked bags are subject to screening and TSA agent may be required to cut off any non-TSA-approved locks. TSA has collaborated with many companies to make travel locks that can be opened by a TSA master key. At TSA security check points, passengers are required to remove any electronic device larger than a cellphone from their carry-on. TSA encourages travelers to pack their electronics in

security-checkpoint-friendly bags or cases. These bags have dedicated compartments that hold laptops or tablets, which zip open to lay flat on the X-ray conveyor belt. These compartments do not have metal zippers or pockets that block the scanner's view of the items within.

### **The Anatomy of a Bag**

Every bag comes with its own pros and cons. Take time prior to purchasing a bag to determine what your needs are and find the best travel bag that meets those needs.

### **Soft-Sided or Hard-Sided**

Soft-Sided luggage is usually made of a woven nylon fabric, such as Cordura or ballistic nylon, which are designed for maximum durability and abrasion resistant. If you select a suitcase made from ripstop nylon, or “parachute” material,” make sure that it is a high-denier fabric, which means that it is heavier.

Pros: Lightweight and can conform into tight spaces

Cons: Not as protective as hard-sided suitcases and is vulnerable to ripping

### **Hard-Sided Luggage**

Hard-sided luggage is made from high-tech plastics, such as ABS (acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene) and polycarbonate, which are lightweight and durable. ABS is the lighter of the two, but polycarbonate is more durable. Hard-sided luggage is usually designed like a clamshell, which features a 50/50 split, allowing you to pack an equal amount on each side.

Pros: Protects breakable contents and can be stacked

Cons: Scratch and scuff easily; No outside pockets

Pro/Con: Limited amount of space; Helps avoid overpacking

### **Wheels or No Wheels?**

#### **No Wheels**

There are a few occasions where “no wheels” luggage proves to be the best choice.

Pros: Ensures maximum interior space and traveling to locations where wheels are difficult to manage due to uneven surfaces

Cons: Can be heavy and burdensome to carry

#### **Two-wheel luggage**

These are called “rollers” since they utilize the same type of wheels that are found on in-line skates, which only roll forward and backward, not side-to-side. This requires the suitcase to be rolled behind you as you pull it.

Pros: Wheels are recessed, which protects them — two-wheelers are better for clearing curbs.

Cons: Can be hard to drag a two-wheel bag in a crowded space. Recessed wheels take up interior storage space.



## **Four-Wheel Luggage**

These have wheels that swivel 360 degrees and are known as “spinners.” They can either be pushed or pulled.

Pros: Easy to navigate in tight spaces. Large or heavy suitcases are easier to manage on four wheels and are ergonomically better for shoulders when maneuvering them.

Cons: External mounted wheels are more likely to break off. According to experts, the wheels attached with screws are more secure than those with rivets. Carry-ons with spinners may have less room inside since the maximum allowable dimensions includes the wheels.

## **Zipper**

There are two types of zippers: chain and coil. The chain zipper, which slides on two sets of interlocking teeth, can be made of metal or plastic. A chain zipper is much stronger than a coil zipper, which has slides on two parallel coils that is usually made of polyester. A “YKKK” zipper is widely believed in the industry to be the most reliable zipper on the market.

## **Handles**

For maximum comfort, look for an adjustable-length and soft-grip handle. Many travelers use the two-post handle system because of its ability to piggyback a smaller bag.

## **Compartments**

The number, size, and configuration of compartments can be an important consideration.

## **Weight**

Consider the weight of your empty suitcase. For airline travel, most of the weight you lug around should be your belongings and not the bag.

## **Smart Features**

Luggage now includes built-in electronics to help you stay connected. Some of the new “connected” suitcases help you know where it is, how much it weighs, and control who can access it by virtue of such functions as location tracking, built-in digital scales, digital locks and fingerprint recognition. (Federal airline safety rules prohibit lithium-ion batteries in checked bags, so you need to look for a bag that has the option to remove them or “pop-out” batteries. Pack the battery in your carry-on with the terminal contacts covered to prevent short circuits.)

## **Locks**

For domestic travel within the United States, luggage locks have to be TSA-compliant, which means that security agents can use a universal master key to open your lock without breaking it. If you are buying an aftermarket lock, check the packaging to see if it is TSA-compliant.

## **Shopping Tips**

### **Measure it Yourself**

Measure the dimensions yourself and make sure that they account for all parts of the bag, including wheels, outer pouches and handles. Do not trust the labels or tags that proclaim, “official carry-on size luggage.”

### **Check the Interior Capacity**

Many manufacturers do not disclose the interior volume. Look for features that maximize the interior space if that is what you need.

- Squared edges vs. curved corners
- Integrated outer compartments
- No wheels or handles (this opens every inch of interior space)

### **Warranty**

If you want to keep your bag for a long time, get one with a manufacturer’s warranty. A lifetime warranty to repair or replace the bag is, of course, the best option.

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