



British table manners

learn
a
language

HOW TO EAT POLITELY IN BRITAIN

Different countries have different ideas about how to be polite. In Britain, 'table manners' (how you behave when you're eating) are important. British people really appreciate politeness. But how do you show good table manners in Britain? Read our quiz and find out!

BRITISH TABLE MANNERS: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

Read our quiz and guess which is the best thing to do in Britain. Tick the choice you think is best.

1. How to sit

When eating, you should:

- a) Lean towards the plate. b) Sit straight. c) Lean backwards.

2. Noises at the table

When eating, it is polite to:

- a) Burp to show how good the food was. b) Make no noise. c) Burp, but into your hand or napkin.

3. Using your fingers

It's okay to eat with your fingers:

- a) Only with certain types of food. b) When you are uncomfortable with a knife and fork.
c) When you feel like it.

4. Passing things

If someone asks you to pass the salt, you should:

- a) Pass the salt if it is near you. b) Pass the salt even if it is nearer to someone else.
c) Use the salt first and then pass it.

5. Speed

In Britain, we like to eat:

- a) Very quickly to show the food is good. b) Slowly as eating is important. c) At the same speed as the host.

6. Your mouth

In Britain we think it's okay to:

- a) Eat quietly with a closed mouth. b) Make a noise when chewing. c) Talk when your mouth is full of food.

7. How much to eat

It is polite to:

- a) Eat everything on the plate. b) Leave a small amount. c) Ask for more.

Now read the information below and check your answers. Find out more about eating in Britain!

Now read the information below and check your answers. Find out more about eating in Britain!

How to sit: You should sit up straight in your chair. It is not a good idea to lean forwards or backwards. When you eat, you should not lean towards the plate but bring the knife, fork or spoon towards you. Don't pick up the bowl and bring it to you. This is considered very bad manners.

Noises at the table: It is never a good idea to make a noise (a burp) at the table, even if it is into the napkin. It is considered rude to do this in the UK. If you accidentally burp, say 'excuse me.'

Using your fingers: Normally we don't pick food up with our fingers when we are eating main courses. If you are uncertain, the safest thing is to use your knife or fork. There are, however, some foods which we usually eat with our fingers. These include: pizza, sandwiches, burgers, chips (or fries) and fruit.

Passing things: If someone asks you to pass something like the salt, only get it if you are the closest person to it. Never lean across someone else's food. It's more polite not to use it yourself first - pass it directly to the person who asked, then use it later. It's best to taste your food before you put salt on it.

Speed: It's best not to eat too quickly. Take your time when eating and try to eat at the same speed as everyone else. If there is food on the table, it is not polite to eat as quickly as possible and then take the extra food yourself. Always ask first if anyone else would like some of the extra food.

Your mouth: It is not thought polite to talk with your mouth full of food, nor to eat with your mouth open. And if possible, don't make a noise. Never lick your plate after eating.

How much to eat: It is polite to eat the food that you have been offered, so a clear plate is a good plate. It shows that you enjoyed the food. If you can't finish everything and you need to leave a little, that's okay. You could say something like 'That was very nice, thank you.'

Find the differences

Now find three differences between table manners in Britain and in your country. What things are the same in both countries?
