

Making Mealtimes Enjoyable

Directions Read the journal entry below. Then follow the directions at the bottom of the page, using separate paper.

Teri's Journal

Dinner with the Brooke family is quite an experience. They invited me over last night, and I still have not decided whether I'm glad I went.

We ate in the formal dining room, with candles on the table. The table was set with good silver and china. Teri told me later that they always eat like that. It was not just because I was there. Teri likes eating with the whole family every evening. She says it is the only time they are all together. That makes it a good time to discuss problems.

When Mrs. Brooke called out that the food was ready, everybody rushed to the table. Mr. and Mrs. Brooke have three children. Ned is 17 and on the high school football team. My friend Teri is 13. She is the one who invited me to dinner. Benjamin is about 8. With me visiting, that made six of us. While Mrs. Brooke carried dishes out from the kitchen, everyone else sat down and started eating. Nobody bothered to turn off the television, which made noise in the background through the whole meal.

Ned started talking right away about his latest football game. Everybody else just sat and listened—or tuned out. After a while, Mr. Brooke told Ned, “You would make better grades if you paid as much attention to homework as you do to sports.” Ned answered

him back and the two of them got into a big argument.

Thank goodness the phone rang and Mr. Brooke jumped up to answer it. At least that broke off the fight with Ned. Everything was quiet except for the television and Mr. Brooke's voice on the phone. Teri told Benjamin to quit pushing food around with his fork. She reminded him that he was not allowed to leave the table until he finished everything on his plate. Mrs. Brooke told Benjamin the nutritional value of each food. Then she asked him how his day was at school. His answer was, “Okay.” Nobody asked Teri or me anything.

The food was really good, and finishing everything on my plate was easy. Teri finished soon after me. Then she grabbed my hand and said, “Come on, let us go.” As she pulled me from the dining room, I could see Ned wander off in the other direction. Mrs. Brooke and Benjamin were the only two left at the table. He was still pushing food around on his plate, and she was still trying to get him to say something about his day at school.

Analyzing Mealtimes

1. List things about the Brooke family dinner routine that you like.
2. List at least five changes that would make the Brooke family dinners more enjoyable.
3. With a group of classmates, prepare and perform a skit about making mealtimes enjoyable.

Feeding Guests

Directions Read the following information about choosing foods for dinner guests. Then complete the activities that follow.

Diet Concerns

When you invite people to your home for a meal, it is polite to ask whether they have any dietary restrictions. That may save embarrassment for you both and enable you to serve something that suits you and your guest.

If someone asks you about diet restrictions, do not list all your likes and dislikes. The host has the right to choose the menu. However, do mention food you can not eat—if you have allergies or religious restrictions, for example. That saves your host the work and embarrassment of preparing a meal you can not eat.

Menu planning for a large group is more complicated. There may be many different restrictions. The wisest approach is to offer choices. Everyone might not eat everything, but each person should find at least some foods to choose. Here are some other suggestions:

- Avoid foods that are off-limits to many people, such as pork and shellfish.
- For a mixed crowd, offer one vegetarian and at least one nonvegetarian main dish, such as chicken.
- Serve toppings such as nuts, cheese, and dressing on the side so people can skip them if necessary.
- Buffet service makes it easy for people to pick and choose.
- For an informal gathering, invite everyone to bring a dish. People who have food restrictions can bring a dish they can eat.
- People with unusual or multiple restrictions should come prepared. For example, someone who can not digest milk products could carry a medication to take if a milk product is eaten by mistake.

Planning Menus

1. **Adapting Menus** Suppose you plan to fix the following for dinner guests: shrimp in cocktail sauce; salad with creamy ranch dressing; spaghetti with meatballs, tomato sauce, and grated cheese; and pecan nut ice cream and peanut butter cookies. On separate paper, explain how you would change the menu if your guest is: a) allergic to nuts and peanuts; b) vegetarian; c) unable to digest dairy products.
2. **Menu Plan for a Group** You belong to a club that is planning a sit-down dinner for 60 people. You are in charge of menu planning. So that people can choose, you must offer two appetizers, two main courses, three side dishes, and two desserts. Write your menu plan on a separate piece of paper.

Relating to Restaurant Staff

Directions Place a check mark (✓) beside the letter of the best response for each restaurant situation below. Discuss with classmates reasons for the choices made.

1. Your waiter drops your fork on the floor by mistake. He apologizes and brings you a clean fork. Which is the best response?
_____ A. Thank the waiter for bringing the clean fork.
_____ B. Ignore the waiter because he is correcting his own mistake.
_____ C. Complain to the manager about the dirty fork.
2. Your waitress takes your order and brings out your food properly. She responds to all your requests. However, she does not smile at you or laugh at your jokes. Which is the best response?
_____ A. Tip her only half as much as you would normally tip.
_____ B. Spend the meal trying to figure out what you did to upset her.
_____ C. Do not take it personally but assume she is having a bad day.
3. When your waiter brings the burger that you ordered “well done,” you find it seriously undercooked. The meat looks almost raw. Which is the best response?
_____ A. Eat the burger as it is without saying anything to the waiter.
_____ B. Ask the waiter to take it back to the kitchen for more cooking.
_____ C. Tell the waiter he will not get a tip unless he does better.
4. You recognize your busy waitress as the sister of a close friend who moved away and lost touch. Which is the best response?
_____ A. Ask the waitress to bring you up-to-date on everything your friend is doing.
_____ B. Introduce yourself briefly and give her your phone number to pass on to you friend.
_____ C. Pretend you do not know the waitress so she is not embarrassed that she did not recognize you.