

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Phil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Phil.

Pippa

And I'm Pippa. In this episode, we're discussing etiquette – the rules about what makes polite behaviour – and in particular the **dos and don'ts** about what you should and shouldn't do when eating. So, Phil, what's the worst thing someone can do while eating, in your opinion?

Phil

For me, it's being very noisy when you do it. I can't stand it.

Pippa

Mmm. OK. I don't have too many rules about eating, but I was always told growing up that you shouldn't have your elbows on the table and I never really understood why, but I always remember that one. So, we'll be hearing more about mealtime manners from some college students and an expert on British etiquette. And, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases, all of which you can find on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Phil

But first, I have a question for you, Pippa. Ideas about polite behaviour change a lot from country to country, so when BBC programme The Food Chain asked listeners from around the world about eating manners in their country, what do you think was the most common complaint? Was it:

- a) people eating with their hands,
- b) people eating noisily, or
- c) people burping at the table?

Pippa

Hmm. I don't think it's people eating with their hands, because lots of people around the world do that as, kind of, their normal way of eating, but maybe it's b) people eating noisily, I think. Like you mentioned, Phil, that's quite annoying.

Phil

Well, we'll find out the answer later in the programme. The Food Chain also interviewed students at London's City of Westminster College about family dinnertimes. Samuel is 19 and from Sierra Leone, and Aya is 18 and British but her family are from Iraq. Let's listen as they chat with BBC World Service's The Food Chain:

Samuel

Yeah, I would say **first impressions** really do matter because it also is really important how you portray yourself – how you present yourself to the person.

Aya

What I don't want to see is any loud chewing, or with your mouth open, please and thank you! I would like to see though eye contact, having a conversation, using your cutlery. Sometimes – and I know this could be, like, **picky** for everyone else – but having a tissue or napkin on your lap just in case you spill anything.

Phil

The students think etiquette is important. Samuel says it's about making a good **first impression**. Your **first impression** is the opinion you form about someone when you meet them for the first time.

Pippa

For Aya, eating with your mouth open is definitely rude. She also thinks people should use a napkin, although that could be seen as **picky**. **Picky** here means being too strict about the rules.

Phil

For this group of students, showing respect and appreciation for the meal is very important, and this idea is common across most, if not all, cultures throughout history.

Pippa

So, imagine a scene from a TV show like Game of Thrones: two enemy forces have stopped fighting, made peace and now gather for a meal. The leaders **clink**

glasses, meaning they lift up and touch drinks, and make a **toast** – they hold up a glass of alcohol and drink it to show respect.

Phil

Now, keep that image in mind because we're going to hear British etiquette coach Rupert Wesson explaining why people **clink glasses**. Here he is, talking to Ruth Alexander, presenter of BBC World Service programme The Food Chain:

Rupert Wesson

Perhaps the simplest example is, "Why do we **clink glasses** when we have a **toast**?" If you **clink glasses**, you're slopping a bit of your drink into his cup and he's slopping a bit of drink into your cup. And therefore, by having that **toast** you are showing: "Look I trust you. You trust me." And that's why we do it.

Ruth Alexander

If you've poisoned my drink that's now slopped into your cup, you won't drink it.

Rupert Wesson

Correct.

Ruth Alexander

Hats at the table – we're hearing from BBC World Service listeners that that is a **no-no**. Is that right?

Rupert

It's not something I would do. In fact, I would not be wearing a hat inside anyway.

Pippa

So, Phil, when we **clink glasses** in a **toast**, some of my drink might spill into your glass and some of your drink might spill into mine. Historically, this mixing of drinks was a way of proving the drinks were not poisoned.

Phil

Ruth also asks about wearing hats at the table and Rupert calls this a **no-no**. A **no-no** is an informal phrase for something that is considered socially unacceptable.

Pippa

Etiquette varies a lot over time and culture, but the essential point is always to show appreciation by doing some things and avoiding others. And speaking of things to avoid, what was the answer to your question, Phil?

Phil

OK. Well, I asked you what listeners of the food chain thought was the biggest etiquette problem when people are eating. You said that it was people eating noisily and I can reveal... that's the right answer! It was people eating noisily. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned about mealtime **dos and don'ts** – rules about how you should and shouldn't behave.

Pippa

Your **first impression** of someone is the opinion you form when meeting them for the first time.

Phil

The word **picky** is used to describe someone who is too strict about rules.

Pippa

If you **clink glasses**, you touch two drinking glasses together as a gesture of friendship, probably because you're making a **toast** – a show of respect that involves drinking from a glass of alcohol.

Phil

And finally, **a no-no** is an informal word for something considered socially unacceptable. Once again, our six minutes are up, but if you'd like to find out more about dining etiquette then head over to our website, bbclearningenglish.com, to download a programme worksheet and try the quiz. See you again soon, but for now, it's goodbye!

Pippa

Bye!

VOCABULARY

dos and don'ts

rules about how you should and should not behave in a particular situation

first impression

the opinion you form about someone when you meet them for the first time

picky

used to describe someone who is too strict about rules

clink glasses

touch two drinking glasses together as a gesture of friendship

toast

show of respect for someone that involves holding up and drinking from a glass of alcohol

a no-no

(informal) something that is thought to be socially unsuitable or unacceptable