



## Lancaster County

444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A / Lincoln, NE 68528  
(402) 441-7180 / <http://lancaster.unl.edu>

# 4-H Table Setting Contest — Procedures and Guidelines

The Table Setting Contest is open to all 4-H members ages 8–18 — participants need not be enrolled in a specific project. It will be held during the week of County Fair on Thursday, August 7, 5 p.m. at the Lancaster Event Center, 84th & Havelock, Lincoln (Exhibit Hall — use east entrance).

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 learn how 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 two divisions, Junior (ages 8–11) and Senior (ages 12–18).

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

## Preregister by July 21

Preregister by July 21 by contacting the extension office at 441-7180. You must give the age of youth (as of January 1 of the current year) and category they will be entering. There is no entry form.



## Categories

Members may enter only one category: Birthday, Casual, Formal, or Picnic (holiday theme can be in any appropriate category).

Here are some category hints:

- Formal — use candles (not lit), more than three pieces of flatware, china (no stoneware), tablecloth and/or mats are acceptable and cloth napkins.
- Casual, Picnic, Birthday — be creative! Theme can be indoors or outdoors. Use any type of cover (tablecloth, blanket, paper, etc.) and any type of table service. Overall place setting should be an expression of the youth's creativity; homemade touches are encouraged! It should be evident which theme you have selected.

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## 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.

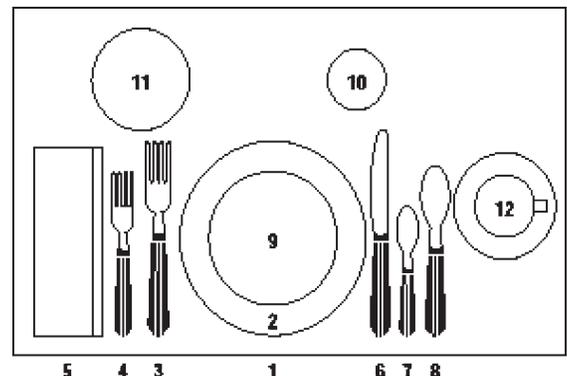
**Place Setting** — Allow at least 20 inches for each person's dishes. This is called a cover and each cover is set exactly the same. A cover contains the dinnerware and flatware for the meal served.

- 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.

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

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. The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoons.



*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 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 My Pyramid to plan nutritious meals. 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. **For more information about MyPyramid, go to <http://mypyramid.gov>**

*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 judge spends 5 minutes with each participant. To alleviate some of the waiting, judging is divided into half-hour time slots. Five participants are assigned to each half hour. Prior to the contest, you will be mailed your assigned half-hour time slot with the judge.

**Registration & Set Up** — Please arrive 15–30 minutes prior to your assigned time to set up your table (set up is not timed, only time with the judge). 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).

When you arrive, check-in at the registration table. You will be assigned a specific area to set up (numbers are taped to the floor). Areas are grouped by category.



ONLY contestants will be allowed in the judging area. After registering, there will be someone to assist the 4-H'er in carrying their things to the judging area. No parents, family, or viewers are allowed in the judging area until all contestants have been judged. This is being courteous and respectful to all contestants and judges.

Participants must have their table setting ready by their assigned time. Once you have set your table, go to the participant waiting area.

**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 judge as your guest. *You should extend a welcome to your guest 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 guest 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.

**Public Viewing & Awards** — After all contestants have been judged, all tables will be on view for the public (approximately between 7 and 7:30 p.m.). An announcement will be made when tables are open for viewing. Ribbons are awarded at the end of the contest (approximately at 8 p.m.)

**After the Contest** — The top exhibit in each category and division will be on display in a case in the Lincoln Room during the remainder of the fair. All other table settings may be dismantled after the Table Setting Contest and taken home.

## Additional Information

If you have questions, call Cathy Hurdle, 202-3753 or the extension office, 441-7180.

NOTE: University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension and Lancaster Event Center are not responsible for any damages.

*A Table Setting workshop will be offered during Clover College held June 17–20 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln. Must preregister.*

## 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 decorated and/or prop up the menu.

1) (a) List the foods in the order in which they are served.

(Every menu will not include all the foods listed.)

Appetizer  
Main Dish  
Starchy Vegetable  
Other Vegetables  
Salad  
Bread  
Dessert  
Beverage

### EXAMPLES FOR A FORMAL MEAL:

<b>Broiled Ham</b>
<b>Grilled Pineapple Slices</b>
<b>Cole Slaw</b>
<b>Hot Gingerbread with Applesauce</b>
<b>Coffee   Milk</b>

<b>Cream of Broccoli Soup</b>
<b>Curried Toast Fingers</b>
<b>Fresh Fruit Salad Plate</b>
<b>with Lime Sherbet</b>
<b>Crescent Rolls</b>
<b>Glazed Chocolate Roll</b>
<b>Coffee   Milk</b>

(b) 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:

(a) place the main item to the left and the accompaniment to the right,

**Braised Pork Chops      Applesauce**

(b) or you may center the main item and write the accompanying item underneath,

**Braised Pork Chops**  
**Applesauce**

(c) if more than one accompaniment appears, place one at each side on the same line,

**Sesame Seed Wafers   Tomato Bouillon   Saltines**

(d) or place both on the same line below.

**Tomato Bouillon**  
**Sesame Seed Wafers      Saltines**

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.

## 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

### 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

### 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



# 4-H Table Setting Contest Score Sheet



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contestant Number \_\_\_\_\_

Age (as of January 1 of the current year) \_\_\_\_\_ Division:  Junior (ages 8–11)

Category:  Picnic  Birthday  Casual  Formal  Senior (ages 12–18)

<b>Table Service (50%)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Is the complete cover correctly set? Is the tablecloth or place mat appropriate? Clean and pressed?	<input type="checkbox"/> see back
Are the dishes and silverware appropriate?	
Is the centerpiece appropriate (color, height, occasion, visible from all sides)?	
Total effect — coordination of originality and creativity	
<b>Menu (20%)</b>	
Menu: A minimum 4" x 6" printed or typed on medium of choice (may be propped up). Correct spelling, use of capital letters and foods in correct order as served.	
Food Choices: Do food preparation, type and variety of foods to be served compliment each other? Are the foods suitable for the occasion and theme? Nutrition value?	
<b>Participant (30%)</b>	
Is 4-H'er well-groomed? Neatly and appropriately dressed?	
Interview: How 4-H'er presents themself (eye contact, clarity, volume of voice). Does the 4-H'er demonstrate an understanding of table setting techniques and the menu, food preparation and food safety?	
4-H'ers conduct and sportsmanship	

Ribbon:  Purple  Blue  Red  White

# 4-H Table Setting Contest Score Sheet

## Cover not correctly set — see the following rule(s) for setting a table

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- 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. The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoons.

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

