Start with the Plates:

  Position the dinner plate squarely in the middle of the place setting (directly in front of the chair). Place the bread plate and the butter knife above and to the left of the dinner plate (with the butter knife resting on the bread plate).

Position the Dinner Utensils:

  Set the smaller salad fork and the larger dinner fork to the left of the dinner plate, resting them on top of the napkin and plate (if the napkin is in a napkin ring, the forks should go between the napkin and the plate). Place the dinner knife and the soupspoon to the right of the plate (with the knife's blade facing the plate). Always arrange the utensils in the order they'll be used, from the outside in.

Add the Glasses:

  Set the wineglass and the water glass above and to the right of the dinner plate. The wineglass should be the closest glass to the plate. With the water glass above and slightly to the left of it.

Add the Dessert Utensils:

  It's perfectly acceptable to bring dessert spoons and forks to the table when dessert is being served, but if you'd like to have them on the table for the duration of the meal, place them above the plate, with the spoon on top and pointing to the left, and the fork below with its prongs pointing to the right.

Finish with the Napkin:

  "I (kay) like to have pretty cloth napkins (the kind that don't have to be ironed!) on hand to add color to my table." Fold the napkin and lay it to the left of the dinner plate with the folded edge facing away from the plate, or fold attractively and place on the plate. "I (Donna) like to use anything round for a napkin ring or stuff and fluff the napkin in the glasses for flair. I also like to use 2 napkins for color." Children can participate by coloring on white paper napkins that have a pattern. This will add a festive air and involve the children, teaching them about decorating a table.

Hint:

If all these guidelines escape you when you're minutes away from a dinner party, just remember "BMW", which stands for "bread, meal and water" in that order from left to right.