

Dinner Candles (Tapers). How-to

Equipment

Candlestick

Candle

Candle adhesive (wax buttons)

Scissors

Bobèche

Foil

Food Wrap

Lighter

Candle snuffer

Spirit level

Ruler

Steps

1. Remove all packaging material and check the candlestick
2. Trim the wick 1/4" (7mm)
3. Insert the candle into the base of the candlestick
4. If necessary adjust the candle base to secure
5. Place on table
6. Ensure candle is upright
7. Place Bobèche
8. Light the candle and check the flame
9. Extinguishing
10. Allow the wax to cool before moving
11. Reusing
12. Storing
13. What causes the wax to drip?
14. Candle Safety

Detailed Steps

1. Remove all packaging material and check the candle is in good condition and straight. A warped candle will probably drip.

2. Trim the wick 1/4" (7mm)

For the candle to burn efficiently the wick needs to be approximately a quarter of an inch. If the wick is too long it will produce too much heat, this rapidly melts the wax causing it to drip and have a sooty and flickering flame. In this state the candle probably won't last long and there will be a lot of wax to clean up from the candlestick and the tablecloth.

If the wick is too short it might not light. If it does the flame will be weak and could either be drowned as the wax melts or even the slightest draught could extinguish the flame. To remedy this cut away the candle wax to expose more of the wick.

3. Insert the candle into the base of the candlestick

When placing a candle in the candlestick you need to insure it will not fall out even if the table is bumped. Ideally your candlestick's socket will be an exact fit and the candle will stand straight.

4. If necessary adjust the candle to fit the socket

Do all the (potentially) messy work on an easy to clean surface to prevent any damage to the dining table or tablecloth

Ideally the candle's base and candlestick's socket match perfectly and if needed products such as candle adhesive or wax buttons will secure the candle in place, but not all candlesticks are a standard size so depending on the width of the socket you may have to either increase or decrease the diameter of the candle's base. Adjustments should be minor.

The candle's socket is too wide

If the candle is too narrow I cut a strip of kitchen foil and wrap it around the candle's base until it fits in the socket securely

The candle's socket is too narrow

Pare down the candle's base with a sharp knife.

Try not to create a sharp point as the candle will be unstable, it is better to gradually shave the wax evenly on all sides until it fits snugly

You can gently twist the candle to ease it into the socket but be careful not to use force as the candle could crack or break. The candle should be vertical to burn evenly and prevent dripping. Candelabra arms are often easy to bend; hold the cup (aka capital) to prevent any pressure on the arm when placing the candle into socket.

Tap or gently shake the candlestick to ensure it is set in place

5. Place on table.

6. Ensure the candle is vertical

The Candle needs to be vertical and not leaning at an angle; otherwise it will not burn uniformly and cause drips.

Often dining tables and floors, (especially if they are old or antique) are not completely flat. Over time they become warped. Metal candlesticks and candelabra can bend over time so it's important to look at the candle and adjust it to a vertical position.

7. Place Bobeche

A Bobeche is small saucer (usually made of glass) with a hole in the middle designed to stop any wax drips reaching the candle socket or table. Simply slide it down the candle until it reaches the socket.

8. Light the candle and check the flame

To avoid any dramas before the guests sit at the table I like to burn for approximately 10 minutes to ensure the flame is perfect and then extinguish it. Another advantage of doing this is the candle will light very quickly when relit.

I prefer to use a lighter with a long neck (kitchen-grill lighter) rather than matches or cigarette lighters especially when I have to light a lot of candles, no burnt fingers, no mess and cigarette smokers don't steal them!

9. Extinguishing

Using a candle snuffer is the safest way to extinguish the flame as your fingers won't come near the flame. The snuffer works by starving the flame of oxygen, you may need to cover the flame for a few seconds.

Blowing candles out too aggressively will cause the melted wax to splatter over the table, which you then need to clean. Better to hold an open hand behind the candle and blow as gently as you can until the candle is extinguished.

Personally I prefer to extinguish the flame by wetting my thumb and forefinger and gently squeezing the flame for a nanosecond, just enough time to allow the water on my fingers to kill the flame and most importantly to stop the wick smoking. The important thing to remember when you are doing this is the water extinguishes the flame, not your fingers, so don't squeeze tightly or hold the wick.

I don't like snuffers as the soot builds up inside and if the snuffer touches the melted wax it there will be a mixture of sooty wax inside, this can drip (especially when snuffing more than one candle) leaving black wax where it drops.

When blowing and snuffing to extinguish candles they release a trail of smoke, if you have a room full of candles the room will be full of smoke, I try to avoid this incase it sets off the smoke detectors

10. Allow the wax to dry before moving

After extinguishing, allow the wax to cool and solidify before moving the candle as this can cause splashes or drips, these can damage surfaces or even burn you.

11. Reusing

A dinner candle should burn at approximately an inch an hour so if it is ten or twelve inches long the chance is you will have quite a lot left to reuse.

A used wick will be brittle and may be bent over, especially at the very top so be careful not to knock it off. I like to clean the excess wick and carbon by gently pinching it and drawing my fingers upwards along the wick, the most brittle part should come off easily. If I have a lot to do I use a tissue between my fingers.

If the flame is sooty trim the wick to a ¼", if the wick is too short cut away some of the wax.

12. Storing Candles

Most candle makers advise storing candles in their original packaging and placed horizontally in a cool, dark and dry place to avoid color fading, melting, warping or cracking. All good advice, but I prefer to keep dinner candles at a steady temperature in the refrigerator. The only negative to this is hand dipped tapers are made of many fine layers, these are brittle when cold so handle them with care until they reach room temperature

13. What causes the wax to drip?

- The candle should be vertical, not leaning (make sure the candle isn't warped)
- Bumping the candle or table, this can cause the wax to spill out
- Drafts from any source such as a fan, HAVC vent or open window

14. Candle Safety

Remember open flames are dangerous and candles are one of the top ten causes of domestic fires

- Never leave candles unattended
- Keep away from drafts and walls
- Candles should never be allowed to burn to the base of the holder, if they do take care as the candleholder may be hot
- They should be properly placed in holders to prevent them from tipping
- Keep away from fabrics especially window treatments that can blow against them
- As the candle burns down check the flame will not be near anything combustible such as table decorations and flowers
- Do not place them where they can be tipped over easily
- After dinner extinguish (don't leave in a vacant dining room)
- Check rooms carefully before retiring (including bathrooms)
- Always place candles on a flat, level, heat resistant surface away from drafts and combustibles.
- Keep away from pets and children
- Never on the shelf of a bookcase

- If you keep candles on a mantle or any other surface close to a wall keep it as far from the wall as possible.