A placemat designed to provide a padded, sanitary surface off which a child can eat while also providing an accessory restraint system. The placemat consists of a cleanable mat with a bumper, frictional backing and loops used to attach accessories, all of which attaches to a horizontal surface by way of adjustable arms and pins, screws and grips. The placemat is completely portable and easily attaches to tables of varying thicknesses and shapes.
FIG. 2B
PLACEMAT WITH PROTECTIVE BUMPER AND ACCESSORY RESTRAINT SYSTEM
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not applicable

BACKGROUND

[0002] 1. Field of Invention

[0003] This invention relates to placemats, particularly for use by children when dining, specifically adding new functionality.

[0004] 2. Description of Prior Art

[0005] When children are seated in chairs at restaurants, they are often seated at a level lower than desired and they often lean over the chair into the hard, sharp edge of the table. In the past, parents or guardians were required to diligently observe the child to ensure against injury on a hard table edge or surface, greatly reducing an opportunity of enjoying the meal, social atmosphere and dining companions. Prior art, U.S. Pat. No. 6,116,162 to Santa Cruz et al (2000), attempted to solve this problem by providing a bumper of sorts, but the prior art allowed the removal of the bumper padding, allowing the opportunity for the padding to be loosened, removed or lost, eliminating the bumper capability.

[0006] Because of the multitudes of table types and thicknesses, a means of attachment to the table must accommodate varying thicknesses. Based upon prior art, U.S. Pat. No. 6,116,162 to Santa Cruz et al (2000) description, figures, preferred materials, and proposed embodiments, one can observe that the proposed J-shaped “inserts” adversely limit the thickness of the table that the prior art can accommodate.

[0007] Because children may resist the use or desire to remove the placemat system, it is desirable to create a highly frictional relationship between the placemat and the table. Though prior art, U.S. Pat. No. 6,116,162 to Santa Cruz et al (2000) cover material of choice, vinyl, provides some friction against movement, it is neither addressed nor suggested to be designed specifically to overcome such an issue.

[0008] Understanding that a caregiver in charge of a child most often has numerous toys and supplies to transport, it is desirable to minimize the opportunity to lose parts of an apparatus. The “slidably . . . remove[able]” inserts in prior art, U.S. Pat. No. 6,116,162 to Santa Cruz et al (2000), are able to be lost or broken when not inserted in their respective slots. The loss or breakage of these key apparatus would render the prior art placemat unusable.

[0009] As mentioned above, for the sake of feeding and entertaining children, many toys, books and feeding accessories are transported. Often, when a child is given an object, it is played with then deposited on the floor. No prior art has addressed the issue of restraining the accessories of a child, keeping them suspended or removed from undesirable surfaces.

SUMMARY

[0010] The purpose of this placemat is to provide an accessory restraint system that is adjustable but securely fastenable, and provides a sanitary surface as well as an edge bumper.

[0011] Objects and Advantages

[0012] Several objects and advantages of this placemat are:

[0013] (a) to provide means of attaching a plurality of links (prior art) or other tether system, of any suitable material or design, to the invention and subsequently moveably attaching any children’s accessories;

[0014] (b) to provide fasteners, able to: attach to but avoid structural or decorative elements of the furnishing, adapt to uneven surfaces, and accommodate a plurality of furnishing thicknesses;

[0015] (c) to provide a plurality of gripping surfaces of traction-providing material, able to resist the horizontal pull of the user;

[0016] (d) while having moveable parts, to be designed to remain assembled at all times, eliminating the opportunity to lose parts;

[0017] (e) to, while remaining as one object, be collapsible for easy transport and storage;

[0018] (f) to provide in combination a protective bumper and placemat that is reusable, water-resistant, made from non-toxic materials and is able to be cleaned;

[0019] (g) to provide a bumper, placemat and restraint system that is moveably attachable to substantially any suitable table of choice, including various shaped tables, either geometric or amorphous in shape;

[0020] (h) to provide, in combination, a protective bumper, placemat and accessory restraint system wherein the cover member is substantially made from any suitable material of choice, such as vinyl or the like, which is washable, non-toxic, water-resistant, etc.;

[0021] (i) to provide a bumper that includes any suitable cushioning of choice therein, such as any typical padding that is non-toxic and washable, or the like;

[0022] (j) to provide a means to adjustably, both horizontally and vertically, attach and moveably affix the placemat to the table;

[0023] (k) to provide substantial protection for the table;

[0024] (l) to provide substantially a sanitary eating surface;

[0025] (m) to alleviate any hard or sharp edges or protrusions of the existing table that may injure the user;

[0026] (n) to be of sufficient size to cover substantially at least a portion of the table within arm's reach of a child when seated at the table;
DESCRIPTION—FIGS. 1A THROUGH 7A
—PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0058] The referred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in FIGS. 1 through FIG. 7.

[0059] The mat 11 is composed of multiple slats 10, permanently attached to the frictional backing 12, butted so tightly together that when as shown (FIG. 1), the slats 10 create a surface that appears without any open joints or cracks.

[0060] Two loops 14 are located on the left and right sides of the mat surface, functioning in a way so that prior art links 8 may be attached to them. The c-shaped base 16 is made of a thickness such that its thickness plus the thickness of the frictional backing 12 will equal the same dimension as the depth of the slats 10 plus the frictional backing 12, creating a smooth transition between parts. The height of the c-shaped base 16 is typically 3 inches. A washable bumper 18 is affixed to the c-shaped base 16, of a thickness to shield a child from injury should impact occur between the child and the c-shaped base 16.

[0061] A pin 20 requiring pressure to disengage it from the provided pin grommets 22 is provided to maintain the desired length of the adjustable arm 30. The pin 20 is depressed thus allowing said arm 30 to move horizontally. A screw 26 with a frictional grip 28 at the end opposite the knob 24 is provided at the distal end of the arm 30, to tighten against the prior art table 6. By turning the knob 24 in a clockwise motion, the grip moves vertically upward to sandwich the table between the grip 28 and the frictional backing 12.

[0062] Operation—Preferred Embodiment

[0063] First, one unrolls the placemat allowing the mat 11 to be fully extended. The screws 20 are loosened by rotating the knobs 24 in a counter-clockwise direction to increase the distance of the grip 28 to the frictional padding 12. Once the screws 26 and subsequently, the grips 28 have been adjusted to accept the depth of the table 6 between them, the c-shaped base 16 is slid horizontally, and pressed firmly against the table 6. The screws 20 are tightened by rotating the knobs 24 in a clockwise direction to decrease the distance of the grip 28 from the table 6.

[0064] If the table 6 has structural or decorative impediments to avoid and requires arm 30 extension, then pin 20 is depressed while arm 30 is adjusted in the desired direction by either pulling or pushing in a horizontal direction. The pin 20 will pop into an available grommet 22 to retain the desired arm 30 length.

[0065] To use the accessory restraint system, one attaches prior art links 8 through the loops 14, linking and extending the prior art links 8 the desired length. The distal end of the length of prior art links 8 is then attached to the accessory of choice, such as prior art drink insulator 40 or prior art toy 42.

[0066] To remove the placemat from the table 6, the screws 20 are loosened by rotating the knobs 24 in a counter-clockwise direction to increase the distance of the grip 28 to the table 6. The c-shaped base 16 is pulled horizontally from the edge of the table 6. If desired, the bumper covering 32, protecting the bumper 18, may be wiped with a wet cloth for cleaning.
To store the placemat, beginning at one end of the mat 11 parallel with the table 6 edge, one rolls the slats 10 of the mat 11 toward the frictional backing 12, coiling them until they cannot be coiled any further.

DESCRIPTION—FIGS. 1A-2B—ALTERNATE EMBODIMENT

As an alternate embodiment, the mat 11 may be comprised of a singular surface, such as vinyl, with an integrated or mechanically incorporated frictional backing 12. This mat may also utilize suction cups (prior art) 44 at the end most remote from the user in order to attach it more firmly to the existing table surface on which it is used.

The grips 28 of this embodiment may also be automated, closing tightly upon contact with the underside of the table surface, through the use of a battery operated power button 46.

Operation—Alternate Embodiment

First, one unrolls the placemat allowing the mat 11 to be fully extended. The c-shaped base 16 is slid horizontally, and pressed firmly against the table 6. Suction cups (prior art) 44 at the remote end of the mat would be adhered to the surface. The grips 28 are engaged with the underside of the table by pressing and holding the power button 46 the appropriate direction to decrease the distance of the grip 28 to the frictional backing 12.

To remove the placemat from the table 6, the grips 28 are loosened by pressing and holding the power button 46 the appropriate direction to increase the distance of the grip 28 to the table 6. The suction cups (prior art) 44 are disengaged from the surface. The c-shaped base 16 is pulled horizontally from the edge of the table 6. If desired, the bumper covering 32, protecting the bumper 18, may be wiped with a wet cloth for cleaning.

To store the placemat, beginning at one end of the mat 11 parallel with the table 6 edge, one rolls the mat 11 toward the frictional backing 12, coiling it until it cannot be coiled any further.

CONCLUSION, RAMIFICATIONS AND SCOPE

Accordingly, the reader will see that the use of this placemat with protective bumper and accessory restraint system is simple and effective when used to protect against accidental bumps and injuries sustainable on the edge of a dining table or eating surface.

Furthermore, the placemat with protective bumper and accessory restraint system has additional advantages in that

it provides a sanitary eating surface;

it provides a non-removable padding that cannot be lost, which would diminish the usefulness;

it can accommodate varying thicknesses of surfaces to which it may be attached;

its frictional surface backing and table-depth adjustable grips overcome the obstacle of children removing it while in use;

its working apparatuses cannot be removed, thus avoiding loss that would render it unusable;

it restrains children's accessories, keeping them from undesirable surfaces.

Although the description above is specific in many details, these are not to be used to limit the scope of the invention as they have been provided to explain further the features of the preferred embodiment. For example, the mat can be composed of other systems, not limited to the slatted version illustrated in the preferred embodiment drawings; the grips can be comprised of another system achieving the same result, such as a pin and grommet system, etc.

Thus, the scope of this invention should be realized by the attached claims and their legal equivalents, rather than solely by the examples given.

I claim:

1. A combination protective bumper and placemat, wherein the improvement comprises:

   a. utilizing prior art plastic toy links or another tethering system and,

   b. loops affixed to the placemat, providing means to restrain accessories from falls and loss,

   c. the ability to be reduced in size for ease of transport while remaining one singular unit at all times.

2. A method for attaching said combination protective bumper, placemat, and accessory restraint system to an exposed edge of a table, wherein the improvement comprises:

   a. utilizing a means of frictional materials and a variable-depth, compression-type gripping system.

   3. Said protective bumper is of a washable material, permanently affixed to the structure.

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