We’re talking wine of course. When do you need to let it breathe, or decant before pouring?

Here are a few tips:

1. Decanting an old wine (15-20 years old) for too long can ruin it. Old wines are quite delicate and should be opened just before the meal. Otherwise, oxidation spurs rapid changes in the wine leaving it “dead” by the time you drink it.

2. Young wines often need to breathe—with gusto! Most often, this would be the case with big, tannic reds. Pouring such a wine back and forth several times from decanter to decanter will aerate it and give it a chance to open up and reveal its complex flavors and aromas.

3. Typically, a red wine 7-8 years old is a good candidate for breathing.
4. A wonderful way to allow a wine to open up is during a leisurely dinner. How many big, brash reds have we disliked on first sip, only to have them become our favorite wine by the end of the meal. The changes in the wine can be fascinating and fantastic.