



# 100 Things Restaurant Employees Should Never Do



**The restaurant biz is tough. But it's tougher if you're making these mistakes every day. Here's a listing of my 100 pet peeves that you shouldn't be doing while working in a restaurant.**

**The following is a list of absolute do nots and everything in between. Some apply to you, some don't. Use what you can and dispose of the rest. To some it up... **Just do the right thing.****

- All people are your 'guests', they are not customers.
- If a new guest enters your bar or restaurant, be sure to offer a warm greeting, a smile and look them in the eye!
- Every guest in the place is your responsibility, not just 'your tables'.
- Do not refuse to seat a party of 4 if only 3 guests are here. Get them to a table so they can start spending money!
- If your guest's reservation is running long... it is not their fault, it is the restaurant's. Recover with a gesture of goodwill like an appetizer while the party waits, or perhaps a round of drinks?
- Every drink should have a bevnep under it at the bar. No exceptions.
- Assume every bar guest is eating. Set them up with silverware and a napkin. They will tell you if they are not eating. When they tell me that... I take it as a challenge to sell them some food. Everyone eats at my bar!

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- When approaching a table, be careful not to interrupt anyone at the table.
- When offering water to the table... don't push the bottles. Someone who just wants tap water will appreciate that you didn't shade them. Remain neutral on this.
- When talking about the specials... this is a great opportunity for extra sales, not just your duty to recite them to a table. Engage, acknowledge and SELL! Be excited about this!
- If a water glass is on the table and needs to be refilled... it is NEVER ok to pick it up and refill it. Leave it where it is and use your pitcher to pour into it. Once a guest touches their glass... it's theirs... don't pick it up until they are finished with it.
- Do not touch the rim of a water glass, or any other glass, when you serve it or when your bus it.
- Handle wine glasses by their stems and silverware by the handles.
- When you ask, "How is everything?" or "Are you enjoying everything?", listen to the answer and address their comments.
- Never say "I don't know" to any question without following up with, "I'll find out."
- Do not take an empty plate from one guest while others are still eating the same course. Wait until everyone is finished.
- When delivering the food or drinks... know before approaching a table who has ordered what. Do not ask, "Who's having the shrimp?"
- If someone is unsure about a wine choice, help them. That might mean sending someone else to the table or offering a taste or two.
- If someone likes a wine, suggest to them to take a photo of the label, so they can better find it again.



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- Do not pop a champagne cork. Remove it quietly, gracefully. The less noise the better.
  - Never let the wine bottle touch the glass into which you are pouring.
  - Never remove a plate full of food without asking what went wrong. They came to eat, then didn't eat, something went wrong.
  - Never touch a customer. No excuses. Do not do it. Do not brush them, move them, wipe them or dust them.
  - Do not have a personal conversation with another server within earshot of customers.
  - Do not eat or drink in view of guests, ever!
  - Do not drink alcohol on the job, even if invited by the guests. "Not when I'm on duty" will suffice.
  - Try to avoid saying, "No problem", it is a negative statement. It has a tone of insincerity or sarcasm. "My pleasure" or "You're welcome" will do.
  - Do not compliment a guest's attire or hairdo or makeup. You may be insulting someone else.
  - Do not discuss your own eating habits, if you're a vegan, bully for you. Lactose intolerant or diabetic, that should not enter your tables conversation.
  - Do not curse, no matter how young or hip the guests seem to be.
  - Do not gossip about bosses, co-workers or guests, especially within earshot of guests.
  - Do not turn on the charm when it's tip time. Be consistent throughout.
  - If there is a service charge, alert your guests when you present the bill. It's not a secret or a trick.
  - If the check has been signed, do not pick it up until the guests have left the table.
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- Know your menu inside and out. Know your chef specials and be able to 'sell' them not just 'tell' them.
  - Do not serve an amuse-bouche without detailing the ingredients. Allergies are a serious matter; peanut oil can kill. (This would also be a good time to ask if anyone has any allergies.)
  - Do not ignore a table because it is not your table. Stop, look, listen, lend a hand. Whether tips are pooled or not. This is a reflection of the restaurant as a whole, but it will also go a long way to build synergy within this restaurant.
  - Bring the pepper mill with the appetizer or salad. Do not make people wait.
  - Do not bring judgment with the ketchup, or mustard, or hot sauce, or whatever condiment is requested. Your chef may not appreciate this request, but we are in the business of guest satisfaction not chef ego gratification.
  - Do not leave place settings that are not being used.
  - Look directly at the person who is ordering, make eye contact, then thank them for their order.
  - Do not fill the water glass every two minutes, or after each sip. You'll make people nervous. Be aware and fill it when it needs to be filled. Be attentive, but don't helicopter.
  - Don't make excuses, just make it right. Never blame the chef or the busboy or the hostess or the weather for anything that goes wrong. Just fix it with sincerity.
  - Always remove used silverware and replace it with new.
  - NEVER return to the guest anything that falls on the floor, like a napkin, spoon, menu or soy sauce. Unless it's a child. Those should go back to the parents.
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- Never stack the plates when clearing, and NEVER put a bustub on the table.
  - Do not reach across one guest to serve another.
  - If a guest is having trouble making a decision, help out. If someone wants to know your life story, keep it short. If someone wants to meet the chef, make an effort.
  - Never deliver a hot plate without warning the guest, don't ask a guest to pass along that hot plate.
  - Salads should be served on cold plates, hot food on hot plates, and hot beverages in a pre-heated serving glass. Don't serve a hot drink in a cold glass.
  - Do not serve soup without a spoon. Few things are more frustrating than a bowl of hot soup with no spoon. It should have already been placed on the table.
  - Do not serve a steak without a steak knife. Few things are more frustrating than a juicy steak with no spoon. It should have already been placed on the table.
  - Let the guests know the restaurant is out of something before the guests read the menu and order the missing dish.
  - Do not ask if someone is finished when others are still eating that course.
  - Do not ask if a guest is finished the very second the guest is finished. Let guests digest, savor and reflect on the meal they just had.
  - Do not ask, "Are you still working on that?" Dining is not work — until questions like this are asked.
  - When someone orders a drink 'straight up', determine if they want it 'neat', right out of the bottle, chilled, in a martini glass? Up is up, but "straight up" is not a definitive term.
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- When someone orders a martini... the term martini means it gets vermouth. But most folks don't want any vermouth. It's not your role to school your guest, just ask them if they like vermouth or not. They will usually say, "No Vermouth."
  - Don't insist that a guest settle up at the bar before getting seated at their table. Transfer the tab, without attitude. They probably planned to stiff you anyway... don't spoil their Scroogyness! They are making room for someone better.
  - If you drip or spill something, clean it up, replace it, offer to make right whatever damage you may have caused.
  - Do not fail to upsell every order. Extra sales are extra tips. Assume at the beginning of the meal that this party will have... Cocktails, appetizers, salads, main course, wine, after dinner drinks and dessert. Every time slot is your opportunity.
  - After dinner... this a great opportunity for extra sales. Assume that your guests are having dessert, coffee AND after dinner drinks. Clear their dinner plates, and immediately place the dessert menu down and start talking about the wonderful delights awaiting them... when they order more!
  - Don't bring a check until someone asks for it. Then give it to the person who asked for it. Unless this table is camping. Then it's OK to 'move along little doggie'! Be careful with this!
  - If more than one person asks for the check, find a neutral place on the table to leave it. If someone gives you a credit card early. Don't ask, just secretly look at that guest and they will signal you to initiate payment.
  - Do not stop your excellent service after the check is presented or paid. You are their server until they leave.
  - Do not ask if a guest needs change. Just bring the change.
  - Never patronize a guest who has a complaint or suggestion; listen, take it seriously, address it.
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- If someone is getting agitated or effusive on a cellphone, politely suggest that they continue their private conversation, privately, away from other guests.
- If someone complains about the music, do something about it, without upsetting the ambiance. (The music is not for the staff. Never hover long enough to make people feel they are being watched or hurried, especially when they are figuring out the tip or signing for the check.
- If a guest goes gaga over a particular dish, get the recipe for him or her.
- Don't let them see you sweat. Do not show frustration. Your only mission is to serve. Be patient. This business is not easy.
- Guests, like servers, come in all packages. Show a "good table" your appreciation with a complimentary dessert, a plate of biscotti or something else management approves.
- If you are a server and you ring in a round of drinks... don't run to the bar to wait for them. Give the bartender a minute or two to prepare your order. You don't run to the kitchen when you order food do you?
- If a guest asks for a 'strong' drink, ask them if they would like a double? "Yeah... you are my 'Bro', but, it don't work that way..."
- If you see someone who has had too much to drink, get involved, and try to ascertain how this person is getting home. Do not let them leave to get in their car to potentially hurt someone, or worse.
- Don't flirt, when there's work to be done. Respect your teammates!
- If you take a trash out to the dumpster, replace the bag with a new clean one, ready to go. Don't be lazy.
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- Don't call 10 minutes before your shift to say you are sick. Did you feel OK when you awoke? You're not fooling anyone.
  - If you forget to ring in an order... fess up! Tell your guest and try to fill the extra time with something that will smooth things over. Don't just blame it on the kitchen.
  - If there's trash on the floor, pick it up! If you work here... you probably spend more time here than you do at home. Would you leave trash on the floor at home?
  - Don't lie, cheat or steal!
  - Don't forget about the hardworking dishwasher back there! If you are bringing a bustub full of dirty dishes back to the dishring, then bring an ice cold coca-cola for them too. This goes an especially long way in the middle of a rush!
  - Don't forget about the hardworking cooks and chefs back there! Bring an ice cold coca-cola for them occasionally. This goes an especially long way in the middle of a rush! Your relationship with the kitchen is VERY important. You can't do this successfully without their support.
  - Don't clear the table until everyone is finished. Except if someone pushes their plate out of their way. Then clear just that person's plate.
  - Do not fail to leave your station cleaner, better stocked and more ready for the next shift. Your station should be better than you found it! This will reverberate in ways you can't imagine.
  - Do not conduct logistics with another team member within earshot of a guest.
  - If you work in the restaurant business, do not expect to have off on Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve. Your best tactic is to communicate with your manager in early October to plan these special days out. Volunteer to work this and this and this, if I can have off on this and this. Be way ahead of your teammates, and you wont be disappointed in December.
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- If a guest is happy with everything, and expressing that, do not fail to encourage them to post on social media. This is an excellent time to suggest a photo or two, so they can post those with their review. Make sure to ask them to mention you by name.
- Do not bring your troubles from home into the workplace. 'Try' to put on a happy face. Easier said than done!
- Do not let anyone see you using your mobile phone on the floor. We know it's there, and you must have it on you, but it sends a bad message if you are texting, while your guest needs something.
- Don't carry clean straws in your dirty apron. Use a <http://straw-buddy.com>
- Don't have your friends come in to camp out at your bar all night. You may think it looks like you are building business, your boss thinks you are giving away free drinks to them all night. Perceptions...
- Don't look down upon the person who is ordering something you deem a 'rookie' order. If your guest likes white zinfandel... get them that, happily. They may be a rookie, but that doesn't give you the right to judge and be a condescending jerk. I get tipped on white zin too!
- Do not allow 'service animals' to eat at the table or bar. People and their pets have gone haywire on this issue. No I will not order an \$18 cheeseburger for your little lap dog.
- Do not fail to do the '2 minute check back' after the food has been delivered. If something is not right, address it before it irritates your guest. Fix it!
- Do not show up for your shift without a pen, notepad and a wine bottle opener. No it's not ok to borrow one from the bartender.
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- Don't let the pressure of the moment get to you. This can be a very stressful business. Just stay calm and do your best. They can't do anything to you!
- Before you leave at the end of your shift... do not fail to ask your manager... "Is there anything else I can do for you before I leave?"
- Never say... "That's not me job." If something needs to be done in a restaurant, bar, hotel or nightclub... it's everyone's job to accomplish it together as a team. Of course you are not expected to get into the dishring to wash dishes, but if you can make their job easier by cleaning out the bustub and stacking the plates and soaking the silverware... then you are a team playah!
- Don't trash talk. Stay positive and complimentary all of the time. This is a tough business. It's tougher when there is a room full of petty gossipers trying tear each other down. You are better than that. Prove it, by staying out of the negativity.
- \*Bill Gates once said, "Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning."  
(Of course, Microsoft is one of the most litigious companies in history, so one can take Mr. Gates's counsel with a grain of salt. Gray sea salt is a nice addition to any table, ouch.)

*Just Do The Right Thing*

