

The 10-Step Guide to Stress-Free Waiting Tables

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Waiting tables at a restaurant can be a fun way to make money. And while the fast-paced environment of many restaurants can seem stressful, it doesn't have to be. Yes, it's true—no matter where you wait tables, customers will have certain expectations. In general, they will expect friendly service, to receive what they ordered, food that tastes good, and that everything from being seated to getting the bill take place in a reasonable amount of time.

Fulfilling these expectations is often easier said than done. It can be stressful. After many years in the industry I have discovered the most efficient ways to get the job done, and I believe in sharing. Follow this ten-step guide and you will end your next shift with less stress and full pockets.

Ten Steps to Success as a Waiter

1. Greet the table within two minutes of seating.	6. Check back within a minute or two.
2. Offer the best drinks the restaurant offers.	7. Clear from the right and offer to pack up left overs.
3. Suggest your favorite appetizers	8. Suggest your favorite dessert from the menu.
4. Write down their meal order.	9. Deliver the check with thanks.
5. Serve the food professionally, from the left.	10. Thank them again for coming.

1. Greet the Table Promptly After Seating

Greet your table within two minutes after they are seated. Granted, this is sometimes hard during a busy rush, but it's vital. If you can't stop and introduce yourself, at least say hello as you walk by to let them know you will be with them soon. This way the customer knows that you're aware of their presence. When you can, stop, make eye contact, introduce yourself, and ask how they are doing on this fine day. If there are young children, ask if they need a high-chair. Your kindness towards the customer will often be matched with their kindness towards you later on in the form of a tip.



Waiting tables is fun. Just look at her smile!

2. Offer the Best Drinks Available

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wine, suggest a glass or bottle of something finer. If they order a vodka tonic, suggest a particular top-shelf vodka like Grey Goose or Ketel One. This practice is called up-selling.

If the table needs more time to decide on their drinks, offer them water in the meantime. Once you have taken the drink order, return to the bar or the service station, fill the order, and deliver it to the table as quickly as possible.

3. Suggest Appetizers

The customer has their drinks. Now is the time to offer any appetizers. People are often indecisive about what they want, and they need your help. Suggest some of your favorite appetizers from the menu. Perhaps there are special appetizers of the day. Describe them. Often times customers will have no intention of ordering an appetizer but will change their mind after hearing your suggestions.

Once appetizers are ordered, deliver them as quickly as possible. Make sure the table has extra plates and silverware if necessary. By being prompt, anticipating their needs, and suggesting foods you recommend, you'll build a reputation with your customers as a great waiter.

4. Write Down the Food Order

This step is crucial. When taking an order, *write everything down*. Make sure you got their order right by reading it back to them. If you are unsure, double check. Customers never get annoyed by questions making sure their order is correct, but they get very annoyed when the wrong food arrives and the right food doesn't.

If any of the items ordered involve a particular condiment, bring it to the table immediately. This makes your job easier for when the food is eventually delivered.

5. Serve Food Professionally and Offer More Drinks

It's important to use good, professional style when serving the food. Customers will notice and appreciate when you serve from the left and serve women and children first. These are good habits for a waiter to develop. When you set the plate on the table, face the main item (the sandwich, piece of meat, etc.) towards the customer. Check that everyone is happy and ask if you can bring anything else to the table. Offer any refills or another round of drinks and leave the table in peace.

6. Check Back Soon to Make Sure All Is Well

Within a few minutes of delivering the food, check back. As a restaurant customer, you know there's nothing worse than salivating over a hot plate of food that isn't what you ordered, or one dripping in peanut sauce—when you're allergic to peanuts. Make sure nothing is missing from their order, everything tastes good, and that they are happy.

After the initial check-back, you can leave the table alone unless you see an empty drink. Anticipate the needs of your customers by refilling drinks or bringing more bread before they have to ask.

7. When They Are Finished, Clear From the Right

Ask to make sure a customer is finished, if it isn't obvious. Once they're done, clear all plates, silverware, napkins, condiments, and any trash that is on the table. It's proper to clear plates from the guest's right. If they have any leftovers they want to keep, offer to put them in a to-go box.

8. Suggest Your Favorite Desserts



Once the table is cleared, offer dessert, coffee, and tea. In the same way you tempted the customers with appetizer suggestions, offer a few of your favorite desserts. At least offer to show them the menu.

9. Deliver the Check With Thanks

When everyone is finished, leave the check in the middle or at the end of the table. Thank the table kindly. Look back often to see if they have left a credit card. If there is cash in place of a card, always provide change. Asking "do you need change?" could be too presumptuous and might result in a smaller tip.

10. Thank Them for Coming as They Leave

These days, with all the restaurants people have to choose between, it's smart to put in that little extra effort to thank customers for coming in. As your guests get up to leave and are about to exit, try to catch the eye of one customer and thank them again. You'll leave a great impression and they'll be more likely to come in again. With locals who live near the restaurant, your tips will grow as you develop a clientele of customers who like your service.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Ask the author a question

Ask

