Server Training Manual

A new server learns most of the job from whoever they shadow, which means each one learns it a little differently. This manual sets out the steps of service at a small restaurant, from the moment a table sits down to the moment the guests leave, so every guest gets the same experience. Fill in your own timings, menu knowledge and POS details, and use it alongside a few shadow shifts.

What you'll need

- Your menu with allergens marked
- Table and section map
- POS login
- Order pad and pen

Steps

01 **Learn the table numbers and your section before the shift.**

Learn the seat numbers too, so food goes to the right person without asking.

02 **Greet a new table within 1 minute of them sitting down.**

Even if you're busy: "Hi, I'll be right with you." Then bring water or menus.

03 **Ask about allergies before you take any order.**

"Does anyone have an allergy I should tell the kitchen about?"

Watch out: Never guess about an allergen. Ask the kitchen, then tell the guest what you found out.

04 **Take the drink order and bring the drinks within 5 minutes.**

Suggest one or two drinks if guests are unsure.

05 **Take the food order, going around the table in one direction.**

Write the seat number next to each item, then read the order back.

06 **Enter the order into the POS right away, with every change.**

Flag allergies with the allergy button or note in the POS, never just by telling the kitchen.

07 **Run food to the table and place each plate by seat number.**
Say the name of the dish as you set it down, and avoid reaching across guests.

08 **Check back within 2 minutes or two bites.**
"How is everything?" Fix problems right away and tell your manager.

09 **Clear plates when everyone at the table has finished.**
If you're not sure someone is done, ask before you take their plate.

10 **Offer dessert and coffee before you bring the check.**
One sentence. If they say no, bring the check without making them ask for it.

11 **Present the check and take payment.**
Confirm the total out loud for card payments. Follow the cash handling procedure for cash.

12 **Thank the guests and reset the table within 5 minutes of them leaving.**
Wipe it, set it again and tell the host it's ready.

13 **Finish your side work before you clock out.**
Restocking, polishing glasses, rolling silverware. Your manager assigns it.

How to adapt it

- Add your menu as separate procedures, with the allergens for each dish.
- Have new servers shadow at least two full shifts before taking a section.
- Replace the example timings with the ones that suit your restaurant.
- Add your wine and cocktail notes for servers who also sell drinks.