

Occupations and Workplaces

Server - General

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What are the general duties of someone who works in a restaurant, cafe, or similar job that involves serving food to the public?

The duties of servers, table wait staff, hostesses, bus-boys, and other food and hospitality personnel vary according to the workplace.

Some of the main duties of servers in restaurants, bars, cafes/coffee shops, fast food restaurants, cafeterias, food trucks, or other locations that serve food to customers include:

- Greet customers.
- Provide customers with information about the meals, including the ingredients in each meal to assist with dietary needs/restrictions, etc.
- Take orders and relay them to the kitchen and bar staff. Provide necessary information to those preparing the food.
- Maintain food and kitchen hygiene.
- Carry and serve food, drinks and meals to customers.
- Prepare bills and process payment methods.
- Work with computers and other electronic devices.
- Clean up the tables or the kitchen.
- Be aware of customer actions while on the premises (e.g., be alert to potential issues or acts of theft).

Please also see the occupational profile about [cooks](#), as other health and safety hazards may be present if the server spends time in the kitchen or cooking area.

What are some health and safety issues for servers?

Work environments such as restaurants, hotels and bars, where food and beverages are served, present a unique set of hazards.

The main health and safety issues for servers include:

- [Food and kitchen hygiene](#).
- [Standing](#) or walking for long hours.
- [Lifting](#) or carrying heavy trays.
- Risk of burns from dishes, meals, or drinks that are hot.
- [Repetitive manual tasks](#) or working in [awkward positions](#).
- Risk of back injury from [pushing](#), [pulling](#) or [lifting](#) objects.
- Injuries from [sharp objects](#), [knives](#), [scissors](#), [blades](#), [box cutters](#), etc.
- Exposure to various [chemicals](#), which may include paints, solvents, [pesticides](#), [perfumes](#), or [cleaning products](#).
- [Noise](#) exposure.
- [Indoor air quality](#).
- [Slips, trips and falls](#).
- Dealing with difficult or potentially [violent](#) customers. [Working alone](#).
- [Handling money](#).
- [Bullying](#).
- [Stress](#).
- Fire or other emergencies.
- [Fatigue](#) or other health effects of [shift work](#) or [extended work days](#).
- Exposure to common viruses such as [colds](#), [seasonal influenza](#), and [coronavirus](#).

What are some preventive measures for servers?

- Establish [good hygiene practices](#).

- [Wash your hands](#) frequently using soap and water, especially before eating, drinking, or smoking, or after using the toilet, and at the beginning and end of the day.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Learn safe [lifting](#) procedures.
- Learn [fire safety](#) and emergency evacuation procedures, including how to assist customers during evacuation.
- Learn how to use equipment and tools safely.
- Avoid awkward body positions and take frequent breaks.
- Wear appropriate [footwear](#) with non-skid soles.
- Wear appropriate [personal protective equipment](#) and apparel for the task.
- Keep all work areas clear of clutter.
- Establish [good housekeeping](#) practices.
- Learn safe handling and storage procedures before working with [hazardous products](#) and [consumer chemical products](#).
- Know how to react in a [negative or violent situation](#).
- Learn and follow the organization's violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures.
- Do not exceed the capacity of the shelves when storing food or supplies.
- Do not block fire exits and fire extinguishers.
- Keep a first aid kit/box within easy access.
- Know where the [first-aid](#) kit is located and how to contact first-aid responders.
- Know how to [report hazards](#).
- Participate in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System ([WHMIS](#)) education and training.
- Follow [labels](#) and read the safety data sheet ([SDS](#)) for any hazardous product you use and follow recommended safety precautions.

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Practice safe [lifting](#).
- Find ways to minimize [musculoskeletal disorders](#) on the job.
- Inspect the work area before each shift.

- Exercise caution when working with knives and other sharp equipment.
 - Follow company safety rules.
 - Work safely with chemicals according to recommended practices.
 - Select the correct [personal protective equipment](#). Use, maintain and store it according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
 - Keep a mobile phone or other alternative means to contact a designated person when working alone.
 - Know how to [report a hazard and a near miss](#).
 - Follow [good housekeeping](#) procedures.
 - Use [hand washing](#) to reduce the risk of common infections.
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