Customer Service Training

A practical front-of-house training and coaching system



PRACTICAL GUIDE / WORKED EXAMPLES / EDITABLE TEMPLATES

Tools for independent restaurant owners and managers

Start with one practical change

For managers training counter, host, server and pickup teams. Use short demonstrations, realistic practice and observed shifts to make service more consistent. Replace every placeholder with your restaurant’s actual policy. This is not a food-safety certification, emergency-response course or legal compliance program. All scenarios and numbers are hypothetical.

Inside this toolkit

1. Turn good service into observable actions
2. Teach the menu without teaching guesses
3. Recover a complaint with a clear owner
4. Practice hard moments before the rush
5. Coach with evidence and close the loop

Make the templates your own

Read the short guide, work through the example, and choose the forms you need. The printable forms follow the guide. The companion Word file lets you change instructions, add your restaurant name, and replace every blank or bracket before use. Duplicate a clean copy for each new shift, campaign, employee, or event.

Edition October 2026. Examples are original and hypothetical. This is an operating resource, not legal, employment, accounting, or food-safety advice. Confirm location-specific requirements and get qualified review where needed.

Turn good service into observable actions

“Be friendly” is hard to coach. Define behaviors a supervisor can see: acknowledge the guest, explain the next step, confirm the order, communicate changes and check that the issue is resolved. Adapt the sequence to counter service, table service and pickup rather than forcing every role into the same script.

- Before the first shift, show the employee where to find today’s menu, unavailable items, ingredient information, approved modifications and manager contacts.
- Write a short standard for arrival, ordering, waiting, handoff and departure. Set realistic timing targets from your operation, then test them during busy periods.
- Teach the handoff between roles. The guest should know who is helping; the next employee should know what has already been agreed.
- Use clear, respectful language with every guest. Ask how you can help instead of making assumptions about a person’s ability, language, budget or preferences.

Hypothetical standard: “Acknowledge waiting guests promptly, explain the queue and update them if the estimate changes.” The manager chooses an achievable local target after observing the team. A timing target is a coaching aid, not a reason to rush guests or hide delays.

Run a ten-minute pre-shift practice: two minutes on the standard, three on a demonstration, three on role-play and two on feedback. Check one behavior in real service afterward.

Teach the menu without teaching guesses

A useful menu explanation covers what the item is, its portion, price, preparation, available modifications and expected timing. Keep a dated reference that the kitchen approves. The training quiz should test whether employees know where to verify facts, not whether they can improvise an answer.

- Choose five high-volume items first. Demonstrate how to describe each in one sentence without unsupported health, dietary or sourcing claims.
- Practice a relevant recommendation: ask one preference question, offer one suitable option and state any extra cost. Accept “no” without pressure.
- For allergies, stop and follow the restaurant’s written allergy procedure. Verify current ingredients and preparation with the responsible person; never infer safety from an item name or remove a garnish as a substitute for the procedure.
- Tell the guest honestly if the kitchen cannot meet the request. Do not promise an allergen-free meal or assume that a small amount is safe. Escalate suspected reactions immediately under the site’s emergency plan.

CDC restaurant guidance highlights staff allergy knowledge, ingredient information and a clear plan for serving guests with food allergies. Source 1. This toolkit’s service practice supplements, rather than replaces, qualified food-safety training.

Hypothetical script: “Thank you for telling me. I need to check the ingredients and preparation with our manager before advising you. I will not guess.” Require every trainee to demonstrate this escalation correctly before independent service.

Recover a complaint with a clear owner

Use five steps: listen, clarify, acknowledge, act within authority and check back. The purpose is to resolve the guest’s actual problem, not to win an argument or immediately offer a discount. Let the guest explain without interruption when it is safe to do so.

- Clarify: “To make sure I understand, the missing item is [item], correct?” Separate facts you know from facts that still need checking.
- Acknowledge the impact: “You expected the full order, and this has delayed your meal.” Apologize for a confirmed mistake without inventing an explanation.
- Offer only available options: a verified replacement time, an approved refund process or a manager review. State any limitation before the guest chooses.
- Own the handoff: tell the manager what happened, what was promised and what the guest prefers. Check that the guest received the agreed resolution.

Hypothetical example: a guest reports a missing side. The employee verifies the order, checks availability, offers the approved remedy and gives a realistic timing update. The manager records the packing failure and changes the check, rather than treating each missing side as an isolated incident.

Pause routine recovery for injury, suspected foodborne illness, allergy concerns, discrimination allegations, threats or payment-security issues. Bring in the designated manager and follow the relevant protocol. Never bargain over safety or ask a guest to remove a review in return for help.

Practice hard moments before the rush

Create a three-person drill: guest, employee and observer. Give the guest a realistic situation without a hidden “gotcha.” Let the employee attempt the response, then replay it once with feedback. Rotate roles. The observer records exact words and actions, not personality labels.

- Delay: the kitchen estimate has changed. Verify the new estimate, update the guest before another promised time passes and offer only approved alternatives.
- Incorrect order: confirm the requested item and the guest’s preferred remedy, notify the right station and check the replacement before handoff.
- Unavailable dish: acknowledge the disappointment, offer a relevant alternative with its price and avoid claiming it is identical.
- Upset or abusive guest: keep a calm tone, involve the manager and follow the restaurant’s safety boundaries. Employees do not need to tolerate threats or physical danger.
- Accessibility request: ask what would help, describe what you can provide and get assistance when needed. Do not disclose or speculate about a guest’s health.

Hypothetical feedback: “You verified the replacement time and repeated the guest’s preference. Next time, say when you will return with an update.” This gives the employee one behavior to repeat and one to improve.

Check for transfer to real service. Passing a role-play does not prove an employee can perform the same steps during a crowded shift; schedule a short observed follow-up.

Coach with evidence and close the loop

Use a small scorecard rather than ranking employees by vague impressions. Record whether each behavior was observed, needs practice or was not applicable. Consider shift conditions and experience level. Do not use complaint counts alone as a performance verdict.

- Observe: select one service period and two or three relevant behaviors. Write a factual example immediately afterward.
- Discuss privately: ask what the employee noticed, recognize a specific action and agree one improvement. Demonstrate the desired behavior.
- Rehearse: run a short scenario, then assign supported practice on the next shift. Set a review date and name the coach.
- Recheck: confirm that the employee can perform the behavior, not merely explain it. Safety escalation must be correct even if the overall score looks good.

Hypothetical measurement: 18 of 20 observed pickup handoffs included an item check, compared with 12 of 20 before coaching. This suggests the behavior improved in those observations. It does not prove training alone reduced complaints, since order volume, staffing and menu complexity may also change.

Review recurring themes weekly: misunderstood menu descriptions, unrealistic wait estimates, missing items and unclear refund authority. Fix the system as well as coaching the individual. Keep logs factual, restrict access and avoid unnecessary guest medical details or payment information.

Completion standard: the employee demonstrates the service sequence, finds current menu facts, uses the escalation route and closes an ordinary recovery case with supervision. Record unresolved practice needs.

Template 1. Service standards and authority card

Restaurant: [name] | Role: [role] | Version/date: [date] | Manager on duty: [contact]. Complete this with the team and keep it available at the service point.

Moment	Required action	Our local standard
Arrival	Acknowledge and explain next step	[words/timing]
Order	Confirm key details and price	[repeat-back/check]
Wait	Update when estimates change	[owner/update timing]
Handoff	Verify items and identify guest appropriately	[method]
Departure	Check needs and thank guest	[method]

Decision	Employee authority	Escalate to
Replacement / remake	[specific limits]	[role]
Refund / discount	[specific limits]	[role]
Allergy / safety concern	[written protocol location]	[responsible role]
Threat / sensitive complaint	[safety protocol location]	[role/emergency route]

Do not promise a remedy outside these limits. Staff sign-off confirms this version was explained and practiced: [employee/date] [coach/date].

Template 2. Complaint scripts to adapt

Practice these aloud, then use natural language. Replace bracketed details with verified facts. A script does not authorize a refund, guarantee timing or replace emergency procedures.

Situation	Useful wording
Listen and clarify	“Please tell me what happened. To check I understood, [fact] is the issue, correct?”
Confirmed mistake	“I am sorry we missed [item/action]. I can [approved option], or ask my manager about [other request]. Which would help?”
Delay	“The updated estimate is [verified estimate]. I will check back by [time]. If that no longer works, I can ask about [approved alternative].”
Need authority	“I do not want to promise something I cannot arrange. I will bring [manager] over and explain what we have discussed.”
Allergy uncertainty	“I need to verify ingredients and preparation with our responsible manager. I will not guess.”
Close the loop	“Has [agreed remedy] arrived as expected? Is anything still unresolved?”

Avoid: “Calm down,” “That is not my job,” “It is definitely safe,” blaming another team member or promising compensation for changing a review. Our approved wording for setting a respectful safety boundary: [manager-approved script].

Template 3. Role-play scenario cards

Run each drill for three minutes, then allow two minutes of feedback and one replay. Choose scenarios relevant to the role. The goal is the action sequence, not memorized wording.

Scenario	Employee must demonstrate	Observer notes
Missing pickup item	Verify order, explain approved remedy, check handoff	[words/actions]
Wait exceeds estimate	Check facts, update honestly, agree next check-in	[words/actions]
Dish sells out	Apologize, offer suitable alternative, state price	[words/actions]
Guest mentions allergy	Stop guessing, use written procedure, involve responsible manager	[words/actions]
Guest disputes bill	Review discreetly, avoid blame, use approval limits	[words/actions]
Guest becomes threatening	Prioritize safety, get manager, follow emergency protocol	[words/actions]

- Observed well: [exact action].
- One action to improve: [specific behavior].
- Replay outcome: [demonstrated / needs support].
- Real-shift observation booked: [coach/date].

Template 4. Menu knowledge quiz and answer key

Trainee: [name] | Menu version: [date] | Coach: [name]. The coach fills the answer-key fields using the current kitchen-approved menu before administering the quiz. Do not invent ingredient answers.

Question	Trainee answer	Verified answer / source
Describe our five most ordered dishes in one sentence each.	[answers]	[approved descriptions]
What does [dish] include and cost?	[answer]	[menu/date]
Which modifications can we actually make?	[answer]	[kitchen-approved list]
Where do you check ingredients and allergy procedure?	[answer]	[reference/role]
What do you do if ingredient information is uncertain?	[answer]	Stop; verify with responsible manager; do not guess.
What is unavailable today and what can you offer instead?	[answer]	[pre-shift list/date]
How do you communicate an added charge?	[answer]	State it before the guest agrees.

Knowledge gaps to practice: [items]. Safety escalation correctly demonstrated: [yes/no]. Next check: [date]. A high total score does not override an incorrect allergy or safety response.

Template 5. Coaching observation and practice plan

Employee/role: [name] | Shift and conditions: [date, volume, staffing] | Coach: [name]. Mark Demonstrated, Practice needed or Not observed. Do not treat Not observed as failure.

Behavior	Rating	Factual example
Acknowledges and explains next step	[rating]	[words/actions]
Confirms order and relevant charges	[rating]	[words/actions]
Verifies facts rather than guessing	[rating]	[words/actions]
Updates delays and owns handoff	[rating]	[words/actions]
Uses authority and safety escalation	[rating]	[words/actions]
Checks agreed resolution	[rating]	[words/actions]

- Employee’s view: [what helped or made the task difficult].
- Keep doing: [specific behavior and why].
- Practice next: [one behavior, demonstration and support].
- Review on: [date/shift]. Outcome: [demonstrated / more support needed].
- System issue to fix: [menu/reference/staffing/POS problem; owner].

Template 6. Recovery and recurring-issue log

Record only what is necessary. Use an order reference rather than full guest details. Store sensitive incidents under the restaurant’s restricted incident procedure, not in this general coaching log.

Case / date	Issue and verified facts	Action / owner	Closed / follow-up
[reference/date]	[what happened; no speculation]	[approved action; name]	[guest outcome/date]
[reference/date]	[what happened; no speculation]	[approved action; name]	[guest outcome/date]
[reference/date]	[what happened; no speculation]	[approved action; name]	[guest outcome/date]

- This week’s recurring issue: [pattern and number of cases].
- Relevant volume: [orders/covers during the same period].
- Likely process gap to investigate, not assumed cause: [gap].
- Corrective action: [change, owner and due date].
- Verification: [how we will check the change worked].

If a public review is involved, keep the reply short, courteous and free of private guest information. Move specific case details to a suitable private channel. Source 2.

Sources and use notes

Official reference sources were checked during preparation in October 2026. Numbered source mentions in the guide refer to the entries below. Original worksheets, examples, and calculations are 63Labs planning tools, not material endorsed by these organizations.

1. CDC: Food Allergy Reactions

Restaurant allergy knowledge, ingredient information and planning. This toolkit is not allergy certification or medical advice. Checked 23 October 2026.

https://www.cdc.gov/restaurant-food-safety/php/practices/food-allergy-reactions.html

2. Google Business Profile: Tips to get more reviews

Professional review replies and protection of private reviewer information. Checked 23 October 2026.

https://support.google.com/business/answer/3474122?hl=en

Before use

Replace hypothetical values with verified restaurant data. Confirm responsibilities, approval limits, dates, offer terms, and local requirements. Do not send drafts, promise prices, or change operating procedures until the appropriate owner has approved them. The pack does not include legal contracts or ongoing updates.