# Front of the House: Duties and Responsibilities

**Unit:** Culinary Arts

**Problem Area:** Career Opportunities in Culinary Arts

**Lesson:** Front of the House: Duties and Responsibilities

## Student Learning Objectives.

Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. **Describe the front of the house functions.**
2. **Review the front of the house duties and responsibilities.**

## Resources.

The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:


E-unit(s) corresponding to this lesson plan. CAERT, Inc. http://www.mycaert.com.

"Front of House," *Manage My Restaurant*. Accessed Feb. 27, 2014. http://www.restaurant.org/Manage-My-Restaurant/Operations/Front-of-House.

Kiefer, Nicholas M. "Economics and the Origin of the Restaurant," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly.* Accessed Feb. 27, 2014. http://www.economics.cornell.edu/kiefer/restaurant.pdf.

Mealey, Lorri. "A History of the Restaurant," *About.com*. Accessed Feb. 27, 2014. http://restaurants.about.com/od/Restauranthistory/a/A-History-Of-The-Restaurant.htm.

Mealey, Lorri. "Wait Stations," *About.com*. Accessed Feb. 27, 2014. http://restaurants.about.com/od/frontofthehous1/a/Waitstations.htm.

Reynolds, Johnny S. *Hospitality Services: Food & Lodging*, 2nd ed. Goodheart-Willcox, 2010.







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## Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## Key Terms.

The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- booking a reservation
- bus person
- call-ahead seating
- cashiers
- expediter
- front of the house (FOH)
- host/hostess
- maître d'
- open seating
- overbooking
- pass-through
- point of sale system (POS)
- reservation
- residence time
- restaurant manager
- seating
- servers
- station
- suggestive selling
- walk-in customers

## Interest Approach.

Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

> *Ask the students the following questions to begin a dialogue about working in the front of the house: What are the advantages of reserved seating? Why might a restaurant make more reservations than there are tables available? How much time would a restaurant need to allow your family to eat a meal? Why is timing so important in food preparation and service? How does it affect customer satisfaction? When eating at a restaurant, what makes your experience most enjoyable?*



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*Explain that a successful restaurant includes more than just good food. It takes good management, communication, and customer service. You may decide to relate any front of the house experiences that you have had in the industry. Then ask students to relate their experiences as a front of the house employee and/or as a customer.*

# CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Describe the front of the house functions.

**Anticipated Problem:** What hospitality functions occur in the front of the house?

I. Front of the house functions

A. Areas

1. ***Front of the house (FOH)*** is the areas of a hospitality business that guests see or use. Front of the house employees include valets, wait staff, bus persons, host/hostess or maître d', cashier, dining room manager, restaurant manager, etc. These people interface with the restaurant expediter who is in the back of the house. The ***expediter*** is the primary communication link between the front and the back of the house. FOH areas that customers see or use include the following:
   a. Valet parking is a customer parking service offered by some restaurants.
   b. A waiting area is a room with seating where people can stay while their tables are being prepared.
   c. The host or maître d' station is typically a tall counter or podium at which customers are greeted and seating choices are made.
   d. Dining areas include table service, booths, and counter service.
   e. A wait station is an area of the dining room that houses all of the supplies a server needs to properly serve the customers. These items may include a beverage dispenser, condiments, to-go containers, extra dishes, and silverware. The wait station must include a hand-washing station to prevent the transmission of food-borne diseases. According to Illinois food code, all wait and kitchen employees must clean their hands in a hand-washing sink or an approved automatic hand-washing facility. They may not clean their hands in a sink for food preparation or ware washing.
   f. A bus station is an area that has all of the supplies a bus person needs to properly do his or her job. These items may include dishes, linens, silverware, etc. The same Illinois food code hand-washing policy applies to bus persons as to wait and kitchen staff.



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g. Bar area employees make and serve drinks and often appetizers.
h. Restroom areas have a washbowl, toilet, and other facilities for employees and visitors to use.

2. The history of the front of the house
   a. Restaurants originated in taverns, inns, cookhouses, and boarding houses before the 18th century in Paris, France. These establishments served a fixed menu at set hours of the day. Profit was primarily from alcohol sales and room rentals.
   b. Everyone sat at one table. Table service was family style, and portioning was competitive. There was no possibility of choice in ordering. People ate what they could get from the common serving. Payment was for a place at the table rather than for dishes ordered or eaten.
   c. As economies grew, the modern concept of dining was created. Restaurants with individual tables, individual orders, flexible dining times convenient to the patrons, and payment by item ordered were attractive to business travelers. Competition among restaurant owners was the origin of customer service—offering services and menu items consumers want in order to make a profit.
3. Front of the house employees interact directly with guests. Their skill set must include:
   a. Exceptional interpersonal skills
   b. The ability to make decisions
   c. Exceptional business sense
   d. Exceptional organizational skills
   e. The ability to stay calm under pressure
   f. Being in good physical condition

B. FOH hospitality functions
1. Seating guests
   a. ***Seating*** is the process of locating dining places (chairs) for customers in a restaurant. A host or hostess greets and seats customers as soon as possible. Many restaurants organize the tables into stations. Seating is typically evenly distributed among each waitperson's station (seating locations allocated to each server). A ***station*** is an area where a person is assigned to work.
   b. A ***reservation*** is an arrangement to withhold a table from others for the customer who requested it. ***Booking a reservation*** is calling in advance to reserve a table for a specific date and time. The main advantage is that people with reservations should have tables ready when they arrive. Other types of food and lodging reservations are:
      (1) Rooms
      (2) Wedding and other receptions
      (3) Sales meetings
      (4) Estate sales and auctions



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(5) Award ceremonies

c. ***Overbooking*** is the practice of making more reservations than there are tables or seats available. Restaurants typically overbook to avoid losing money if guests do not show up for their reservation.

d. ***Walk-in customers*** are people who arrive at a restaurant without a reservation; they "take their chances" to be seated. Walk-in customers receive a time quote for open seats. Many casual restaurants do not take reservations and use an approach called open seating. ***Open seating*** is taking customers to an unreserved table on a first come, first serve basis.

e. ***Call-ahead seating*** (priority seating) is a process in which customers phone ahead to be placed on a waiting list for a table. The call-ahead seating option reduces long wait times for tables in restaurants that do not take reservations.

f. ***Residence time*** is the number of minutes it takes a party to eat a meal, pay the bill, and leave the restaurant. Ninety minutes is the average residence time for a party of four people to eat a complete meal: appetizers, beverages, main course, and dessert.

2. Selling food

a. The sales function occurs when the server takes the customer's food order. Other than the server, the cashier, host/hostess, and bartender also sell food. In many cases, a business may offer sit-down, carryout, drive-thru, pick-up, and/or delivery services in addition to table service. A server may use suggestive selling techniques to recommend menu items to a customer. ***Suggestive selling*** is recommending menu items that the customer might like but did not intend to purchase. This technique often increases sales for the restaurant, thereby increasing the tip for the server.

b. Other ways restaurants sell food

(1) Menus sell by using creative descriptions and attractive pictures.

(2) Some restaurants include wine glasses in place settings or place a bottle of wine on the table to encourage customers to order wine with the meal.

(3) Some establishments offer seasonal or house specials.

(4) Restaurants or servers may display the desserts.

(5) Word-of-mouth recommendations are common.

3. Transmitting orders to the kitchen is a critical part of the restaurant business. This process is broken down into five steps.

a. STEP 1: Taking orders—The server takes the order from the guests. In many restaurants, the server has a notebook, individual check, or order pad to record the table order. Each table in the restaurant is numbered to ensure the order arrives at the correct table location. Many restaurants use a point-of-sale system to transmit the orders to the kitchen. A ***point-of-sale system (POS)*** is a computer-based order entry system that includes an input terminal (key or touch screen) connected to the kitchen order screen and/or printer that may connect to cash registers. Customer orders



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are sent from the dining room, the counter, the drive-thru, etc. to the proper screen or printer in the kitchen. This system has the following benefits:

(1) It is more efficient than writing orders by hand.
(2) It improves order and transmission accuracy.
(3) It calculates and prints guest checks.
(4) It tracks menu items sold and alerts servers to items that have sold out.
(5) It tracks inventory.
(6) It processes credit and debit card payments.

b. STEP 2: Transmitting orders to the kitchen—In a non-computerized establishment, the server brings written orders to the kitchen expediter. In a POS system, the orders are transmitted electronically to the kitchen from a terminal in the wait station or dining room.
c. STEP 3: Preparing orders—Once orders are transmitted to the kitchen, the culinary staff prepares the orders for the guests.
d. STEP 4: Checking orders—Prior to serving the order to the guests, the prepared food order is checked against the actual order. The expediter and the server check the order to ensure it meets the standards of the restaurant. For example, a check includes assuring the portion size, degree of doneness or method (e.g., medium rare or poached), and plating protocols (e.g., item location on the plate, condiments, sides, and garnish).
e. STEP 5: Retrieving orders—Food is served as soon as possible. To help ensure a hot service, a ***pass-through*** is a special service area equipped with heat lamps to keep food hot until it is picked up by the server. Most restaurants have a specific system for alerting servers when their food is ready, such as:

(1) A lighted number board may be used. Each server is assigned a number. When that number is lit, his or her order is ready.
(2) A wireless server-paging system is another method. The chef punches the server's code into the system, and the system pages the server. The server goes to the pass-through to pick up the order.
(3) Any server in the kitchen, despite whose table it is, picks up the completed order and serves the food. (Many chain restaurants use this format to meet their corporate "12-minute or less" quota for food to arrive at the table after ordering.)

4. The serving of food and beverage is a crucial function of the front of the house. A guest should never have to ask for anything. It is the server's responsibility to take initiative and continuously check with customers to ensure satisfaction or to comply with a customer request.
5. Bussing tables
   a. Bussing is setting the place covers on the table, clearing the dirty dishes, and assisting the servers whenever needed.
   b. Bus persons often refill water glasses, coffee, and tea.



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6. Obtaining payment from customers
    a. After any dessert and/or additional beverages are served, the check is presented to the customer. If the server cannot determine the host of the party, the check is placed face down in the center of the table. After the bill is paid, the customers are thanked and are encouraged to return.
    b. Restaurants accept payment in two ways. Customers can take the check and payment to a cashier, or the server completes the transaction between the customer and the cashier.

**Teaching Strategy:** *Explain different options restaurants use for transmitting orders to the kitchen. Use VM–A in your discussion. Ask your students about their personal experiences as servers.*

**Objective 2:** Review the front of the house duties and responsibilities.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the duties and responsibilities of the front of the house staff?

II. FOH duties and responsibilities

A. The ***dining room manager*** is the person responsible for the entire front of the house, including the FOH staff. The dining room manager must have excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to stay calm under pressure. He or she is in charge of the following:

1. Ensuring that the dining room is ready to open 15 minutes prior to the posted opening time and to deliver a creative, sales-oriented service briefing to employees
2. Developing effective schedules for the FOH dining room staff based on levels of business and budgetary guidelines
3. Scheduling and coordinating all dining room personnel's sidework
4. Maintaining cleanliness and organization in the dining room according to established sanitation standards
5. Maintaining appearance and uniform standards of self and staff
6. Being on the floor 100 percent of the time during a meal service period to observe, monitor, and follow up on all areas of the dining room operation on a daily basis
7. Working with the chef on duty to maintain high standards of food presentation and sanitation
8. Training and developing all FOH dining room personnel
9. Providing ongoing feedback to all service personnel concerning all aspects of the dining room operation
10. Controlling costs (e.g., food, labor, and other expenses)
11. Motivating all staff members to maximize sales by utilizing menu knowledge and suggestive selling techniques



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12. Interacting with guests on an ongoing basis to ensure that service and food quality expectations are met
13. Handling all guest service issues immediately and professionally

B. The ***host/hostess*** is the person responsible for managing the flow of customers in the dining room and making the customers feel welcome. In many restaurants, the host/hostess may have additional tasks (e.g., cashier or beverage server). A ***maître d'*** is the head of the dining room staff in a restaurant and may be known as the master/mistress of the house in some geographic locations. The host/hostess and maître d' are responsible for the following duties:
   1. Ensuring that all the menus are clean and in good order, checking the phone reservation list, ensuring the entry door is clean, and creating the seating arrangements
   2. Making all customers feel welcome
   3. Managing the flow of customers in the dining room
   4. Ensuring customers are seated promptly
   5. Managing customers during wait time
   6. Keeping track of occupied tables, tables ready to be seated, and tables being cleared
   7. Following a seating rotation so no servers are overloaded or "slammed" with multiple tables seated in a row
   8. Accommodating the specific needs of couples, families with small children, large parties, the handicapped, etc.
   9. Maintaining a positive relationship and an open line of communication with the servers and bus persons
   10. Taking reservations manually (in a book or ledger) or electronically (with software)
   11. Maintaining or ensuring the cleanliness of the front entrance
   12. Holding the door for customers

C. A ***server*** (waiter or waitress) is an FOH employee who takes orders and delivers food to guests. A server is responsible for the following duties:
   1. Opening sidework—Setting up assigned stations and restocking table goods (e.g., napkins, salt and pepper, candles, and condiments)
   2. Seating guests when the host/hostess is busy
   3. Explaining the seasonal and house specials
   4. Explaining the menu terms and describing dishes to customers
   5. Selling and delivering the dining experience to the customers
   6. Being responsible for kindness, patience, and good listening
   7. Anticipating customer needs and "responding" before the customers ask
   8. Collecting payments from the customers
   9. Closing sidework—Breaking down the assigned station, cleaning, sanitizing, sweeping and/or vacuuming, filling salt and pepper shakers, and refilling condiments



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D. The ***bus person*** is the FOH employee who sets table, clears tables, and resets tables. The bus person is one of the most important employees in a restaurant. He or she helps the server in any way necessary. Without the bus person, a restaurant would quickly become disorganized because the bus person is responsible for the following duties:

1. Moving dirty dishes from the table to the bus station to the dishwasher
2. Setting tables
3. Changing linens
4. Polishing silver
5. Folding napkins
6. Assisting with customer requests
7. Opening the restaurant—Setting up chairs, which may have been moved or placed on top of tables for cleaning; moving food and utensils to buffets; refilling containers of salt, sugar, and other condiments; and stocking bathroom supplies
8. Closing the restaurant—Cleaning the workstation, putting away buffet food and other perishables in refrigerators or freezers, and helping wait staff to complete dining setup for the next shift or day

E. The ***cashier*** is the person responsible for handling the payment of meals and is responsible for the following duties:

1. Preparing a change fund for the till (an amount of money used to make change for customers)
2. Preparing customer bills
3. Making cash transactions
4. Tallying and reporting shift and/or daily receipts
5. Counting the drawer before and after each shift
6. Preparing bank deposits

**Teaching Strategy:** *Use VM–B through VM–D. Assign LS–A.*

**Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. If a textbook is being used, questions at the ends of chapters may be included in the Review/Summary.

**Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.



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## Answers to Sample Test:

### Part One: Matching

1. i
2. e
3. f
4. h
5. j
6. c
7. g
8. b
9. a
10. d

### Part Two: Short Answer

1. The six functions of the front of the house are seating guests, selling food, transmitting orders to the kitchen, serving customers, bussing tables, and obtaining payment from customers.
2. Answers will vary but should include three of the following advantages of using a point-of-sale system. It is more efficient than writing orders by hand. It improves ordering and transmission accuracy. It calculates and prints guest checks. It keeps track of menu items sold and alerts servers to items that are sold out. It keeps track of inventory, and it processes credit and debit card payments.
3. Answers will vary but should include five of the following members of the front of the house staff: dining room manager, host/hostess/maître d', server; bus person, cashier, valet, bartender, and possibly an expediter.

### Part Three: Completion

1. reservation
2. seating
3. dining room manager
4. host/hostess
5. cashier
6. front of the house (FOH)
7. residence time



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**Sample Test**

Name _____

# Front of the House: Duties and Responsibilities

## Part One: Matching

***Instructions:*** **Match the term with the correct definition.**

a. booking a reservation
b. bus person
c. call-ahead seating
d. expediter
e. overbooking
f. open seating
g. pass-through
h. point-of-sale system (POS)
i. server
j. walk-in customers

_____1. An FOH employee who takes orders and delivers food to guests

_____2. The practice of making more reservations than there are tables or seats available

_____3. Taking customers to an unreserved table on a first come, first serve basis

_____4. A computer-based order-entry system that includes an input terminal connected to the kitchen order screen and/or printer that may connect to cash registers

_____5. People who arrive at a restaurant without a reservation

_____6. A process in which customers phone ahead to be placed on a waiting list for a table

_____7. A special service area equipped with heat lamps to keep food hot until it is picked up by the server

_____8. The FOH employee who sets tables, clears tables, and resets tables

_____9. Calling in advance to reserve a table for a specific date and time

____10. The primary communication link between the front and back of the house





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## Part Two: Short Answer

***Instructions:*** **Answer the following.**

1. List the six functions of the front of the house.

2. Describe three advantages of using a point-of-sale system.

3. List the five members of the front of the house staff.

## Part Three: Completion

***Instructions:*** **Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.**

1. An arrangement to withhold a table from others for the customer who requested it is a/an _____.
2. The process of locating dining places (chairs) for customers in a restaurant is called _____.
3. The person responsible for the entire front of the house, including the FOH staff, is the _____.
4. The person responsible for managing the flow of customers in the dining room and making the customers feel welcome is the _____.
5. The person responsible for handling the payment of meals is the _____.
6. The areas of a hospitality business that guests see or use is called the _____.
7. The number of minutes it takes a party to eat a meal, pay the bill, and leave the restaurant is called _____.



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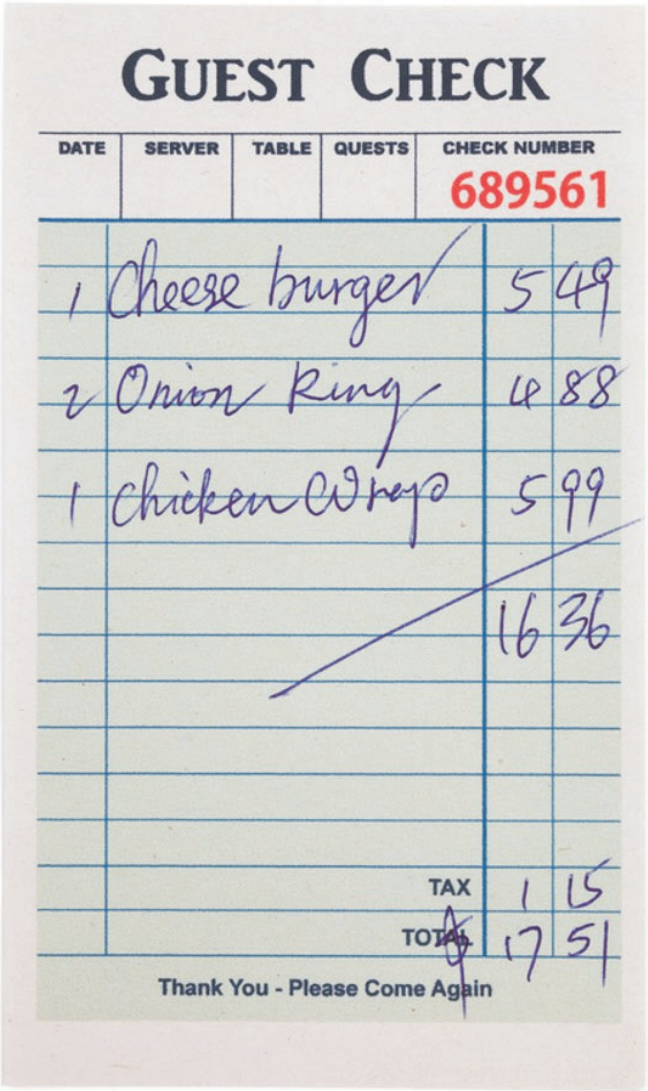
# TRANSMITTING ORDERS TO THE KITCHEN

The server has a notebook, an individual check, or an order pad to record the table order in a non-computerized establishment. Then the server brings the written order to the kitchen expediter.



GUEST CHECK

| DATE | SERVER | TABLE | QUESTS | CHECK NUMBER |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 689561 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cheese burger | 5 49 |
| 2 | Onion Ring | 4 88 |
| 1 | Chicken Wrap | 5 99 |
| | | 16 36 |
| | TAX | 1 15 |
| | TOTAL | 17 51 |

Thank You - Please Come Again



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In a computerized establishment, a server uses a point-of-sale system (POS) to record the order electronically. Then the order is sent to a screen and/or printer in the kitchen. The POS may be connected to the cash register. A POS system is more efficient than writing orders by hand and improves order and transmission accuracy.







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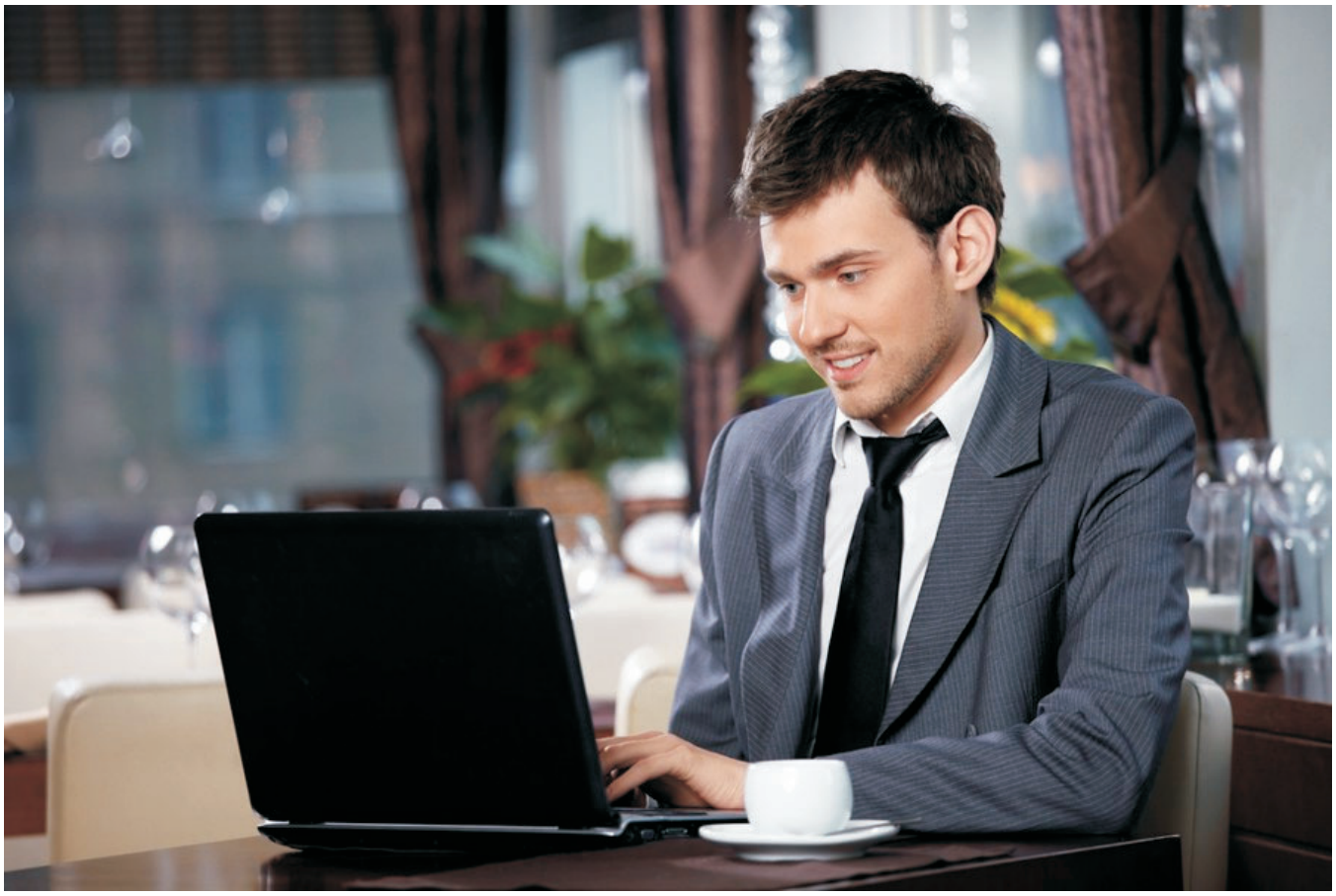
# FRONT OF THE HOUSE STAFF

- A dining room manager should have excellent interpersonal skills, as he or she is in charge of the front of the house staff and service, guest relations, and cash management as well as coordination with the back of the house.





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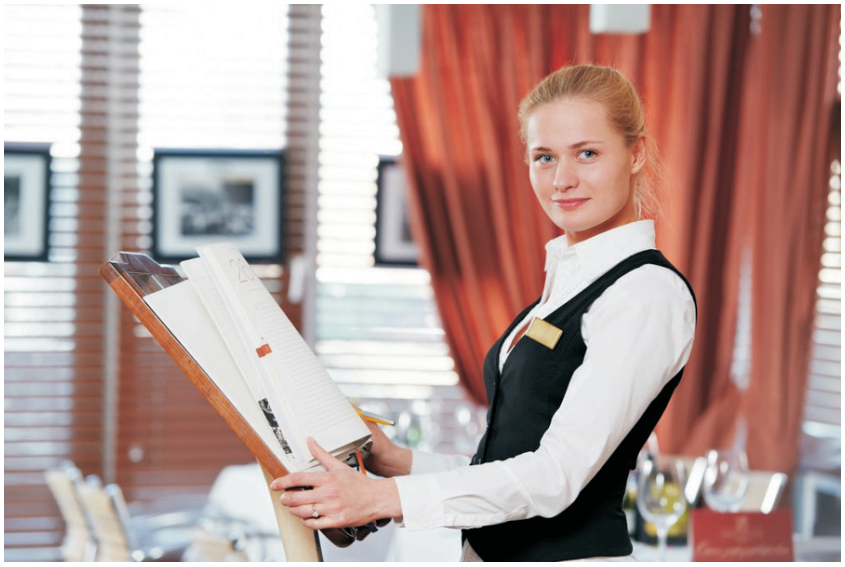
- The host/hostess or maître d' welcomes customers as they enter the restaurant. He or she is in charge of booking reservations, seating, and managing the flow of customers in the dining room.



- Servers are responsible for taking orders, delivering food to guests, and anticipating customer needs and responding to them before customers ask.





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- A bus person sets tables, clears dirty dishes, and resets tables. Without the bus person, a restaurant would quickly become disorganized due to a lack of clean dishes, extended table turnover time, longer wait times for customers, etc.



- The cashier is responsible for handling the payment of meals, preparing a change fund, making bank deposits, and reporting the receipts. He or she must accurately enter and credit coupons, corporate promotional credits, and customer loyalty points.





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# DINING ROOM MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring that the dining room is ready to open 15 minutes prior to the posted opening time and delivering a creative, sales-oriented service briefing to employees
- Developing effective schedules for the FOH dining room staff based on levels of business and budgetary guidelines
- Scheduling and coordinating all dining room personnel's sidework
- Maintaining cleanliness and organization in the dining room according to established sanitation standards
- Maintaining appearance and uniform standards of self and staff





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- Being on the floor 100 percent of the time during a meal service period to observe, monitor, and follow up on all areas of the dining room operation on a daily basis
- Working with the chef to maintain high standards of food presentation and sanitation
- Training and developing all FOH dining room personnel
- Providing ongoing feedback to all service personnel concerning all aspects of the dining room operation
- Controlling costs (e.g., food, labor, and other expenses)
- Motivating all staff members to maximize sales by utilizing menu knowledge and suggestive selling techniques
- Interacting with guests on an ongoing basis to ensure that service and food quality expectations are met
- Handling all guest service issues immediately and professionally



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VM–D

# HOST/HOSTESS AND MAÎTRE D' RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring that all the menus are clean and in good order, checking the phone reservation list, ensuring the entry door is clean, and creating the seating arrangements
- Greeting and making all customers feel welcome
- Managing the flow of customers in the dining room
- Ensuring customers are seated promptly
- Managing customers during wait time
- Keeping track of occupied tables, tables ready to be seated, and tables being cleared
- Following a seating rotation
- Accommodating the specific needs of couples, families with small children, large parties, the handicapped, etc.
- Maintaining a positive relationship and an open line of communication with dining staff
- Taking reservations—manually or electronically
- Maintaining or ensuring the cleanliness of the front entrance
- Holding the door for customers



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LS–A

Name _____

# Front of the House Restaurant Project

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to research and display an FOH system in poster form.

## Objectives

1. Select an FOH system to research.
2. Conduct the research.
3. Record descriptions and unique aspects of the FOH selected establishment.
4. Create an informational FOH poster.

## Materials

- poster board
- glue
- scissors
- magazines (to cut out pictures)
- art materials
- computer with Internet access
- printer

## Procedure

1. Work with a partner to create an informational poster about the FOH staff of one establishment.





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2. Select one of the following restaurant types to research:

    a. Family owned
    b. Buffet
    c. Fast food
    d. Corporate chain
    e. Franchise
    f. Fine dining
    g. Cafeteria
    h. Café or coffee house
    i. Bistro
    j. Fast casual (e.g., Panera Bread®)

3. Review your class notes and discussions to guide your project.

4. Conduct the research. Search for facts, statistics, and "wow" factors. At a minimum, you must include the following elements: staff members, duties, staff responsibilities, dining interiors, floor plan, and menu. Then add other elements that you find in your research.

5. Select the focus of the poster based on your FOH research. Sort through the information and pictures. Select the elements that would create a neat and informative poster. You may not be able to include every detail of your findings. Ask yourself: Which facts and statistics are the most interesting? Which best represent the food business?

6. Create the poster. First, sketch or arrange the poster elements using poster board or the online Glogster tool. You may complete this project manually, using poster board and art supplies, or electronically using Glogster at http://edu.glogster.com/. Try a couple variations of the poster before you "glue" or "print." Include pictures and images that represent the information you gathered. The poster must include a minimum of the following elements:

    a. Staff
    b. Duties
    c. Responsibilities
    d. Dining interiors and floor plan
    e. Menu type

7. With your partner, present your information to the class and display your poster.

8. Turn in your completed project to your instructor.



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