

EDUC5313
Lesson Plan (20 min)
September 11/06

Lesson Title:

“How to be a professional waiter”

Objective: To inform students of the skills, abilities, and information that are required and expected of waiters in the food service industry. This will be instructed through examination of the four integral characteristics of the professional server, and, once this is accomplished, asking the students to role-play problematic scenarios that will typically happen in a busy restaurant. The teacher should not necessarily need background in the food service industry, as most examples and instructions are outlined. Materials needed are outlined and contained in the Appendix section.

Time per Section: **Part 1 (1 to 2 minutes)**
 Part 2 (8 to 9 minutes)
 Part 3 (7 to 8 minutes)
 Part 4 (1 minute)

Part 1:

Preparation:

- I) The topic is first introduced to the class, emphasizing that the instruction will be focusing on learning the skills necessary to become a good server.
- II) A brief talk about personal experience as a server i.e. where you have worked, what it did for you, things that happen in a restaurant. If the instructor has not had waitering experience, merely proceed to step III.
- III) Ask the class to raise their hand if they have ever had a “bad” waiter experience (Revision note: originally I had asked the class to tell individual stories, but this had consumed too much time.). The purpose is to show that unprofessional waitering is prevalent in the restaurant industry, and that it can be combated by familiarizing one’s self with key characteristics.

Note: It is important to not dwell on this section, as the following two sections require more time and depth for explanations.

Total Time for Part 1: 1 to 2 minutes

Part 2:

Characteristics of a “professional” waiter

Class Discussion:

- I)** Ask the class what they think is a key characteristic of being a skilled waiter. Have them briefly discuss this with each other and then attempt to come up with a few ideas to what makes up a professional server. (It should only take one minute). Receive ideas by asking the students to raise their hands.
- II)** See how the answers match up to the four detailed in this lesson plan, and go over those ones first.

The Four Significant Attributes of a Professional Server

Instruction: As the instructor names each attribute, the class will be asked why they think these are important. Then, the four characteristics will be explained in further detail with the lecture points listed below. It is important for the instructor to make sure each detail is explained, otherwise students may find the next section difficult.

A) Friendliness/Politeness

- It is the customer’s expectation of the waiter to be friendly, thus you should do the following things when at a table: introduce yourself, make chit-chat, make jokes. However, do not make jokes at the customer’s expense, as even jokes you potentially see as harmless could result in an upset table.
- As a server you have to make sure you do not make any social faux pas at the table. This is including, but not limited to: hand gestures like pointing, calling people (men and women) guys, and overuse of colloquial language.
- A potential pitfall of friendliness is occasionally becoming overly chummy, crossing the professional line, and offending. Remember, while chit chat gives the illusion that you are buddies with the table, it is important to note that ultimately you are engaged in a business relationship. With time, an experienced waiter should be able to determine what they can “get away with” at certain tables
- Friendliness works in your favour because tables are more inclined to cut you breaks if something goes wrong with their meal. In addition, tips will be higher if you are more recognized as a friendly person rather than a worker.

B) Promptness

- The waiter is expected to be quick as possible when dealing with tables. There are four essential duties that comprise the waiter/table relationship. At this point the class will be asked to try and name them. For this plan, they are: 1) getting their drinks, 2) getting their meals, 3) quality checks

(jargon for when you ask a table “how is everything” or “do you need anything else”), and 4) settling the bill.

- Another important note is that when serving multiple tables is to make sure you get all the drink orders before you take any meal orders. If people are going to have to wait, then at least they will have something to sip on until you come around again.
- There will be times where promptness will be inhibited. Simply say to your table “I’ll be right with you”. No one likes sitting in a restaurant feeling like no one has noticed them.

C) Informative

- The waiter must know the menu, including ingredients, what wine goes best with a certain menu, what you would recommend.
- The table sees you as the solution to all their food-related questions. Do not ever answer a food question without not fully knowing the answer. People may have an allergy to a certain ingredient, and a foolhardy assumption on the part of the waiter may mean life or death.

D) Responsible

- Remember, you are, for the most part, the sole representation of the restaurant you work for when dealing with customers, and the way you act effects the entire restaurant, as customers will assume your actions are indicative of the establishment on a whole.
- Always take the blame for your mistakes. As a waiter, you will be tempted to attempt to pin the blame of your mistakes on something else (i.e. the kitchen, other waiters, other tables etc.), as blunders may affect your tip. However, when you approach a table, you are, in effect, the ambassador of the restaurant, and while no one likes having their food order wrong or their table dirty, assume the blame (regardless of whose fault it may be) and immediately correct the situation.
- If you come across a situation that is potentially volatile, attempting to resolve the problem should almost always become your top priority, no matter how busy you are.
- If a table is angry or upset, always try to appease them with free drinks, dessert, gift certificates or a free meal if the situation is extremely volatile. People will tend to return to places where they once got free merchandise. Always attempt to avoid having a customer walk out in disgust.

Total time for Part Two: 8 to 9 minutes

Part Three: Scenario Role-playing

The class will be given separate scenarios (see Appendix A) and asked to role-play how they, now they are aware of the characteristics of a professional waiter, would react to certain situations. Then go over the reactions. Please advise the class that there is no

wrong answers; however, using the guidelines listed above, you should be able to determine answers that fit the scenario best. The goal of this activity is to evaluate the student's knowledge of the essential characteristics for the professional server.

Total time for Part Three: 7 to 8 minutes

Part Four:
Closure

A recap of what the class has learned (the five characteristics and how they apply to being a professional waiter).

Total time for Part Four: 1 minute

Appendix A: Scenario Role-Playing

Instruction: These can be photocopied and handed out individually, or placed on an overhead and worked on together. It is up to the instructor's discretion

1) It is Friday night. The restaurant you are working at is extremely busy and there are no tables left available. Suddenly, a table of two comes in, and says they had made a reservation for tonight. However, as you look through the ledger, you cannot find the reservation written anywhere. The wait for a new table is at least 25 minutes. As a capable server, how do you approach this situation? (Note: there is a bar in the restaurant with open seats)

2) You have three tables. One table is ready to order their meals. Another has just been seated and do not have drinks yet. The third table is drinking heavily and is clamoring for another round of drinks. Give the order in which you serve the tables and why.

3) As you are waiting for you food to come out of the kitchen, you notice that you accidentally ordered the wrong meal for a customer. How do you approach the customer with your mistake?

4) Someone asks you if a certain sauce has any onions and you can't remember. You are almost 85% sure it doesn't have any onions, and you are fairly certain the person is just asking out of interest rather than concern. How do you answer their question?

5) You are extremely busy with getting drinks and meal orders for another table that has been waiting for a long time, and on your way-by someone at a table you are not serving says their food has a hair on it. What becomes your top priority?

6) You are serving a table of businessmen and they are telling inappropriate jokes and laughing up a storm. Do you tell similar jokes that you know to them, or do you keep them to yourself? Why?

Reflection:

For my lesson plan assignment, I chose to go with a subject that I could instruct upon fairly easily due to my experience as a waiter. The lesson was delivered mainly in a lecture format, with room for student discussion. I asked the members of my group questions and to illustrate examples several times, and, towards the end, I handed out each member a separate role-play scenario, which they would attempt to solve using the information given during the lecture.

From what I saw, the members of my work group seemed attentive to my lesson plan, which was more of a lecture than a hands-on experience (albeit a lecture with heavy participation from the students). The entire table was able to recite the five points I had went over at the conclusion when asked. I received positive criticism at the end discussion, with the only negatives being that I had a tendency to lean on the wall while delivering the lesson, and that I was chewing gum throughout. I believe that I had planned an effective lesson, as not a single member of my table had worked as a waiter before, and they were seemingly surprised and entertained by my explanation of the somewhat unwritten rules behind the profession.

The major enemy of my presentation was time. I had left little time for the students to attempt their role-playing scenarios, as I did not anticipate the correct time allotments for each subject within the lesson. In particular, I asked the members to describe a time when they had a bad waitering experience, but this, however, took up a significantly larger chunk of time than anticipated. As such, I have removed this part out of the lesson plan and instead asked for a show of hands.

As well, in order to tighten up the lecture to fit time restrictions, I combined the categories of friendliness and politeness into a singular characteristic, as the case could be made that they are virtually the same thing. No content was lost in this combination, but it would remove an unnecessary step to go over.

Another plan I would now implement is to avoid telling as many personal anecdotes during instruction. While perhaps entertaining, it was established earlier that I have worked as a waiter, and that the instruction itself is gleaned from such experiences, so anecdotes are unnecessary.

With these several revisions, I was able to place more minutes to discuss Section II, which seemed to take up most of the time (about 10 minutes of my lecture). Because the opening took about five or six minutes (which is significantly more than originally planned), emphasis is now placed on delivering the opening statements and objectives as direct as possible, to avoid eating up time. With the revisions in place, the lecture should be able to be effectively delivered in 20 minutes.

I believe that lesson plans are a definite challenge for myself. While I have some experience as a supply teacher, I do not have much experience with lesson planning. The primary difficulty seems to be effectively presenting content within a limited time frame. While my lesson can be delivered in twenty minutes, during this time window I must be conscious of time restrictions, or I will run out of time. As such, I believe that the greatest challenge of lesson planning is organization, not generating or instructing the content within.