

At the Restaurant

Eating out at a restaurant is a great way to try new foods and get to know a place's food culture. You'll usually have to talk a lot with waitstaff while at a restaurant, so it's a good idea to get prepared with some key phrases.

We've gathered lots for you in the tables below. Check them out and get ready for your next night out in a restaurant!

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Arriving at the Restaurant

In most restaurants and cafés in the English-speaking world you do not seat yourself at a table. Instead you first go to a receptionist desk at the entrance, and the receptionist will seat you. The phrases in this table will be useful to know when talking to a receptionist.

How many are in your party?

How many are you?

Do you have a reservation?

I made a reservation for two at 6:00.

I booked a table for three for 7:00.

Can I get your name?

Your table isn't quite ready.

How long is the wait?

It'll be about a 20 minute wait.

If you want you can have a seat at the bar until your table is ready.

Please follow me.

How many are in your party?

This is probably the first question a receptionist would ask you. The question is asking how many people are with you and will be eating at the restaurant. You might also hear: How many are you?. You'd simply respond by telling the receptionist how many people are with you, like this for example: There's five of us.

Do you have a reservation?

Making a reservation, or in other words, reserving a table for yourself is a good idea when you're worried that a restaurant will be full. Another question that means the same thing as this is: Did you book a table?. In response, you'd simply say whether you have a reservation or not: Yes, I made a reservation for 3 at 7:00.

Please follow me

As soon as your table is ready, the receptionist will signal you and most likely say this sentence or one of the following: You can come with me or Please come this way. You don't really need to say anything in response, but you could say something like: Great, thank you!.

At the Table: Server

Once you are seated, your table will be assigned a waiter or waitress. You'll usually start by ordering drinks and appetizers and then your main course. In the table below, you'll find lots of common phrases used by waiters and waitresses.

Hi, I'm Hanna and I'll be your server for today.

Can I start you off with drinks?

Do you need a couple more minutes to decide?

What would you like for a starter?

Can I get you any appetizers?

What do you want for the main course?

Tonight's specials are a lobster bake and clam chowder.

How would you like your steak cooked?

Would you like a salad with that?

What kind of dressing would you like with your salad?

Would you like fries with that?

Would you like any dessert today?

Anything else?

I'll get that order in for you.

Can I start you off with drinks?

The first thing that you will order at restaurants or cafés are drinks. You might hear the server ask you this question. Alternatively they could also ask: What can I get you to drink? or What would you like to drink?. You would then simply tell them what drink you would like. For example: Could I get a Coke, please?.

Do you need a couple more minutes to decide?

This question, like Are you ready to order? or Can I take your order?, is used to ask if you know what you'd like to eat or drink and if you would like to order. There's many different ways you could respond to this. For example like this: No, I think we're ready or Could we get a few more minutes?.

At the Table: Customer

The phrases gathered in the table below are very helpful and can be used when you want to order food or drinks. Moreover, you can use some of these phrases to ask your waiter or waitress questions.

What is today's special?

We're not ready yet.

Can we have a few more minutes?

Does this come with a side salad?

Does this have any meat in it?

What do you recommend?

Is this a vegetarian option?

Is this gluten free?

Does this have dairy in it?

I'll have a bowl of potato soup.

I'd like a Greek salad.

I'll take a pizza.

Can I get a glass of white wine?

Could you bring us a bottle of red wine?

I'll have a bowl of potato soup

To order something while at a restaurant, use the sentence pattern I'll have + FOOD/DRINK. This is the most common way to order food or drinks. A waiter or waitress might respond to your order by saying something like That is a very good choice.

I'd like a Greek salad

When you'd like to order something at a restaurant, use the sentence pattern I'd like + FOOD/DRINK to do this. To be extra polite, you can add please at the end of your sentence. In response, a waiter or waitress might say Sure, I will bring that right out for you.

I'll take a pizza

Two common ways to order food or drinks are I'll take + FOOD/DRINK and I'll order + FOOD. The first option is very neutral and can be used in any context. The second option is much less common and is used mainly in restaurants. In response, the person taking your order might ask you questions like Do you want any toppings with that?.

Can I get a glass of white wine?

A very common and polite way to order food or drinks is asking questions using the pattern Can I get + FOOD/DRINK?. You can use this in any context. You can also make your order extra polite by adding please to the end of your question. A possible response to our example sentence is Do you prefer sweet or dry wine?.

Could you bring us a bottle of red wine?

A polite way to ask for something while at a restaurant is the sentence pattern **Could you bring + ITEM?**. Use this when you want to order something extra. You can also make your request more polite by adding **please** to the end of your question. A common response to sentences using this pattern is **I will be right back with that**.

Paying for Your Meal

When you finish your meal, you'll have to ask for the check and pay for everything. Don't forget to leave a tip! The following phrases will be useful when you are getting ready to leave a restaurant.

Could I get the check, please?

I'd like to pay.

Can I pay with card?

How was everything?

Can I get you anything else?

That's it for today.

Yes, could I get a slice of apple pie?

Thanks for coming!

Have a nice night.

How was everything?

Waiters and waitresses in American restaurants are usually very friendly. When you finish a meal, they will usually ask you this question. They simply want to know how your food tasted. A polite way to respond to this question is **It was delicious, thank you**.

Have a nice night

As you are leaving a restaurant, a host or hostess will usually say this before you walk out the door. Depending on the time of day, this phrase could be different. For example, they might say **Have a nice day** if you are at the restaurant in the middle of the day. A polite way to respond is **You as well!**

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most essential English phrases that I need to know when eating out at a restaurant?

Can I start you off with drinks?

Do you need a couple more minutes to decide?

Can we have a few more minutes?

I'll have a bowl of potato soup.

I'd like a Greek salad.

Can I get a glass of white wine?

Could I get the check, please?

Can I get you anything else?

Should I leave a tip when I finish my meal?

In the United States it is very important to leave a tip for your waiter or waitress before you leave a restaurant. This usually equals about 15 to 20 percent of what you paid for your meal. Tipping in the United States is not mandatory, but it is considered extremely rude to not give your waiter or waitress any tip. In the UK you tip around 5-10 percent of what you paid for your meal.

How do I order food or drinks when I know what I want?

There are several different ways to order in English:

I'll have + FOOD/DRINK.

I'll have a bowl of potato soup.

I'll have today's special.

I'll have a glass of red wine.

I'd like + FOOD/DRINK.

I'd like a Greek salad.

I'd like a cheeseburger.

I'd like a beer.

I'll take + FOOD/DRINK.

I'll take a pizza.

I'll take a salad.

I'll take a coffee.

I'll order + FOOD.

I'll order the chef's special.

I'll order the vegetarian bean burger.

I'll order a spinach and onion omelet.

Can I get + FOOD/DRINK?

Can I get a glass of white wine?

Can I get the chicken sandwich?

Can I get a cup of tomato soup with that?



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