

RESTAURANT · OPERATING STANDARD 119

The Table Booking Standard

WHO

Hosts and restaurant reception, checked by the head waiter

WHEN

Every request for a table: by phone, in person, by message or email

YOU NEED

The live booking diary, the floor plan, today's notes and the in-house list

TIME TO TRAIN

45 minutes, with three role-played bookings

What this standard achieves

Every guest who asks for a table leaves with a booking that is correct, read back and confirmed in writing. The kitchen and the floor know the occasion, the allergies and the requests before the guest arrives, so nobody at the table has to ask twice.

Measured by

01 Phone answered within three rings or 10 seconds

02 Guest at the host stand greeted within one minute

03 Messages answered within 3 minutes during opening hours

04 Guest's name asked and used at least twice

05 Day, date, time, guests and a contact taken on every booking

06 Occasion and related requests asked on every booking

07 Full read-back before the booking ends

08 Written confirmation sent within 15 minutes

PHASE 1

Before service

STEPS 1-4

- 01 Open the booking diary for today and the next 14 days. Read the notes: private events, closed sections, large parties, VIPs, and in-house guests whose profiles show an allergy or an occasion.
- 02 Know the floor plan by heart: every table number, its seats, which tables join, the terrace and the inside, the quiet corners, the step-free tables and how many high chairs the restaurant has.
- 03 Know the rules you will be asked about: sittings and last seating, how long a table is held (15 minutes), the dress code, the deposit for parties of eight or more, and the cancellation terms.
- 04 Keep the phone, the diary and the message inbox at the host stand. One named person owns them for the shift; when that person seats a table, a colleague takes over the phone before they leave.

PHASE 2

Answer every channel

STEPS 5-10

- 05 Check yourself against The Presence Standard before the first guest: uniform, name badge, hands, and today's VIPs and occasions in mind.
- 06 Answer the phone within three rings or 10 seconds, with the restaurant's name and your first name.
"Good evening, Terrazza restaurant, Marco speaking. How may I help you?"
- 07 Greet a guest who comes to the stand within one minute, even when you are on the phone: eye contact, a nod and one sentence until you are free.
"Good evening. I'll be with you in just a moment."
- 08 Answer chat and messaging requests within 3 minutes during opening hours, and emails within 60 minutes. Outside opening hours, the automatic reply gives the time you will answer and the phone number.
- 09 The lines in this standard are examples. Say them in your own words, calmly and without slang, and let the guest finish speaking before you answer.
- 10 Ask for the guest's name in the first 30 seconds, write it down and use it at least twice. Ask whether they are staying with you, and find the profile on the in-house list.
"May I have your name, please? ... Thank you, Mr Okafor. Are you staying with us?"

- 11** Take the day, the date and the time, and say them back with the weekday before you check the diary. "Saturday" and "the 14th" together catch most wrong dates.

"So that's Saturday 14 June at 20:30. Let me check for you."

- 12** Ask how many guests, and whether any are children, with their ages. Note a high chair or booster at once. For a family, see The Young Guests Standard.

"How many will you be? Will any children be joining you?"

- 13** Check the diary live while the guest waits. If the time is full, offer the two nearest free times or another area, then the waitlist. Never say "that should be fine" before you have looked.

"20:30 is full on the terrace. I can offer 19:45 there, or 20:30 in the dining room."

- 14** Ask about seating: terrace or inside, a quiet table, step-free access. Write it as a request, and promise a specific table only when the diary lets you block it now.

- 15** Ask once about allergies and dietary needs, and write each one against the guest's name, not as a table note. Then follow The Allergy Standard.

"Does anyone in your party have an allergy or a dietary need the kitchen should know about?"

- 16** Take the contact. For in-house guests, the room number, checked against the name on the in-house list. For others, a mobile with the country code and an email for the confirmation.

PHASE 4

The occasion and requests

STEPS 17–21

- 17 Ask what the evening is for, in one open question. A birthday, a business dinner and a first evening after a long journey need different tables and a different pace.

"Is it a special occasion, or simply dinner with us?"

- 18 If there is an occasion, offer one related request with its price: a cake with a message, flowers on the table, a chilled bottle on arrival or chocolates. Book it with the pastry chef or florist before the call ends.

"Would you like a small cake with a message for Mrs Okafor? It's €28, and the pastry chef will write whatever you wish."

- 19 Ask whether the occasion should be mentioned at the table or kept quiet. Some guests want a candle and a song; others want nobody to know.

"Shall we wish her a happy birthday at the table, or keep it discreet?"

- 20 Give the one practical detail the guest will need: the dress code, parking, where to enter, or what happens to a terrace table if it rains. One sentence, only what applies.

- 21 For an in-house occasion, tell guest relations the same day, so one gesture is planned for the stay. See The Occasion Standard.

PHASE 5

Read back and close

STEPS 22–25

- 22 Read the booking back in a fixed order: name; day, date and time; number of guests and children; area; occasion and requests; allergies; contact. Correct anything now.

"Let me read that back, Mr Okafor: Saturday 14 June at 20:30, four guests..."

- 23 State how long the table is held and the cancellation terms, in one sentence each. For a party of eight or more, give the deposit and the date it is due.

"We hold the table for 15 minutes. If your plans change, a call by 16:00 on the day is all we need."

- 24 Thank the guest by name, give your name, say that the confirmation follows, and let the caller hang up first.

"Thank you, Mr Okafor. I'm Marco, and the confirmation is on its way. We look forward to Saturday."

- 25 For a written request, the reply contains the same read-back as a call, in the same order, and asks the guest to reply with any correction.

PHASE 6

After the booking

STEPS 26–30

- 26 Enter the booking in the diary straight away, every field complete, and link it to the guest profile. Never keep a booking on paper or in your head until later.
- 27 Send the written confirmation within 15 minutes: name, day, date, time, guests, area, requests booked, holding time, cancellation terms and the restaurant's direct number.
- 28 Pass each request to the person who acts on it, the same day: allergies and the cake to the chef, flowers to the florist, the occasion to the head waiter.
- 29 On the day, by 15:00, reconfirm every booking of six or more and every booking made over 7 days ahead, by message or call. Release a table only when the guest has said so.
- 30 Before service, print the list in time order with covers, table numbers, occasions and allergies, and check that the number of covers matches the table plan.

What to record

The guest

- ☐ Name, spelled back
- ☐ In-house: room number and name checked
- ☐ Not in-house: mobile with country code
- ☐ Email for the confirmation
- ☐ Returning guest: profile linked

The booking

- ☐ Day, date and time
- ☐ Adults, children and their ages
- ☐ Area or table requested
- ☐ Channel: phone, stand, message, email

Occasion and requests

- ☐ Occasion and for whom
- ☐ Mentioned at the table or kept quiet
- ☐ Cake, flowers or bottle, with the price
- ☐ Booked with: pastry, florist, bar

Diet and needs

- ☐ Allergies, against each guest's name
- ☐ Dietary needs
- ☐ High chair or booster
- ☐ Step-free access or other need

Terms told

- ☐ Holding time stated
- ☐ Cancellation terms stated
- ☐ Deposit and due date, eight or more
- ☐ Dress code or practical note given

Follow-up

- ☐ Confirmation sent: time
- ☐ Kitchen told: allergies, cake
- ☐ Reconfirmed on the day
- ☐ Taken by: name

When the situation changes

The whole evening is full

Offer the nearest free time that day, another day, or the waitlist with the time you will call back. Take the name and mobile either way, and call as soon as a table frees.

The guest wants a specific table

Block that table now if the diary allows and say so. If it does not, say you have noted the request and name the table you can promise.

A party of eight or more

Offer the set menus, take the deposit as the restaurant's rule says and tell the head waiter the same day. Confirm the final number 48 hours before.

The guest says they are running late

Thank them for calling, give a new time you can hold, and tell the floor. If the table cannot wait, offer the next free table or the bar until it is ready.

The guest changes or cancels

Change the booking while they are on the line, read the new details back and send a new confirmation. Pass the cancellation to the kitchen and anyone holding a request.

The concierge books for a guest

Take the concierge's name and the guest's name and room. Confirm to the concierge, and treat the guest at the table as if they had booked themselves.

A guest asks at the door, no booking

If a table is free, seat them now. If not, give an honest wait time, take the mobile and offer the bar or lounge until you call them.

A booking does not arrive

Call the guest once at the end of the holding time. If there is no answer, release the table and note the no-show on the profile with the time.

Common mistakes

MISTAKE

Writing "Saturday" without the date, or the date without the weekday. Half of wrong bookings are a guest and a host thinking of two different days.

MISTAKE

Booking the table and forgetting the cake. The guest arrives expecting a candle and a message, and the evening starts with an apology.

MISTAKE

Saying "we'll find you something nice" instead of naming the table. The guest pictures the terrace and is seated by the kitchen door.

MISTAKE

Taking an allergy as a table note. The waiter knows someone is allergic and nobody knows who.

MISTAKE

Letting the phone ring while the only host walks a table to the terrace. A booking that never got through never shows up in any report.

MISTAKE

Skipping the read-back because the guest sounds sure. The wrong number of covers is found when four people stand at a table laid for two.

Check your team

After training (45 minutes, with three role-played bookings), each person answers these without the sheet.

- 01 Within how long are the phone, a guest at the stand and a message answered?
- 02 What do you say back before you check the diary, and why the weekday?
- 03 In which order does the read-back go?
- 04 Where is an allergy written, and who is told after the booking?
- 05 What do you offer when a guest mentions an occasion, and when is it booked?
- 06 Which bookings are reconfirmed on the day, and by what time?
- 07 What happens when a booking has not arrived at the end of the holding time?

Your Tables in Words

A host who can describe three tables without the floor plan books the right one on the first call. Fill this in for your own restaurant this week.

The table for a celebration

Table number and seats _____

What the guest sees _____

When to offer it _____

One line to say _____

The quiet table

Table number and seats _____

What the guest sees _____

When to offer it _____

One line to say _____

The table for a family

Table number and seats _____

What the guest sees _____

When to offer it _____

One line to say _____

How to use this with your team

Fill in one table per briefing on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday each host describes all three aloud in under 15 seconds each. The head waiter redoes the card when the floor plan changes.

Part of the DolceVita Standards Library: free operating standards for every department of the hotel, at dolcevitahospitality.com/free-resources.