

Bar

The Solo Guest Standard

Five steps for the guest who comes to the bar alone. Some want a conversation and some want peace with a book, and the first two minutes tell you which.

Who	When	You need
Bartenders and bar waiters	Every guest who sits alone, at the counter or at a table	A choice of seats, a reading lamp, a phone charger, today's papers
Measured by A choice of seat offered on arrival · Checked on every 10 to 15 minutes · Seat and drink noted in the profile		

1 Offer the seat

Let the guest choose: the counter for company, a corner table for privacy, a seat facing the room for anyone who prefers to see it. Never lead a solo guest to the table by the door or the station.

"Here at the counter with us, or somewhere quieter, Ms Moreau?"

Common mistake Giving the solo guest the worst table in case a group needs the big one. The guest notices.

2 Read the signal

In the first two minutes, look at what the guest brought: a book, a laptop or a phone in use means quiet; eyes on you and the back bar mean conversation. Read it again after the first drink.

"May I bring you a reading lamp, or is this light all right for you?"

Common mistake Starting a conversation because the guest is alone. Being alone is often why they came down.

3 Talk if invited

If the guest wants to talk, talk about the drink, the city or their day, and let them do most of it. Leave for other guests without apology, and come back within five minutes to pick up the thread.

"Excuse me one minute, Mr Ruiz. I want to hear how the Lisbon story ends."

Common mistake Filling silences with your own stories. Ten minutes later the guest knows about your holidays.

4 Keep watch

Look over every ten to fifteen minutes, by eye if the guest is reading. If a stranger lingers and the guest looks uneasy, step in with a reason: a table that is free, a call, a fresh glass.

"Ms Okoro, the table by the window is free now, if you would like it."

Common mistake Assuming a guest who is reading wants nothing at all. The glass sits empty for twenty minutes.

5 Close warmly

When the guest leaves, use their name and say one thing that shows you were listening. Then note the seat, the drink and whether they wanted company in the profile for the next visit.

"Goodnight, Mr Ruiz. I hope the meeting goes well tomorrow."

Common mistake Ending with the bill and nothing else. The guest leaves as alone as they arrived.

Reading the Guest Alone

Five guests sitting alone, five different evenings. Read the signal first and the right move follows from it.

What you see	What they want	What you do
Book or laptop open, no eye contact	Quiet, good light, a full glass	Serve, offer a lamp, check by eye
Phone face down, watching the bar	Company, at their own pace	Talk about the drink, then the city
On the phone, checking the time	Waiting for someone	Ask whether to hold a seat for two
Eating dinner at the counter	A meal without the dining room	Lay a full cover, pace it like a table
A stranger keeps talking to them	Perhaps a way out	Offer a new seat or a reason to move

How to use this with your team

Read one row per briefing this week and ask the team for a recent example. The bar manager watches two solo guests a night and checks the seat, the signal and a look every 15 minutes.

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