



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 5: RESTAURANT AND BARS · LESSON 24

The Bar: Speed, Memory and Conversation

An ordinary bartender serves drinks.

A good one serves moments.

In five lines

The bar is the only spot in the hotel where the guest sits down to watch you work — and sometimes to tell you about their life. That turns the position into a triple craft: speed (a full bar shows no mercy), memory (the returning guest expects you to remember their drink) and conversation (knowing how to chat, how to listen and how to keep quiet, with each person's bubble properly read). The bartender is host, psychologist and time manager with a shaker in hand. This lesson puts the three crafts in order.

The script, step by step

- 1. The order of a full bar.** Clear, communicated priority: the person waiting on their feet is attended to with your eyes even if your hands are busy ("I see you, be right with you"); the dining-room order isn't left to die late (the server also has a table waiting); and the regular understands the wait if you've greeted them by name.
- 2. Liquid memory.** The second visit is greeted with the first: "the usual?" is the most profitable phrase in the bar. It is built by recording, in the medium the bar authorizes, the relevant service preferences of the returning guest — their drink, how they take it — only what helps to serve them better and only while it does: the bar's memory is pure loyalty-building, and it lives in the team's channel, with access for whoever serves them — not in your own notes or in profiles made out of curiosity.
- 3. Conversation à la carte.** There is the chatty guest, the quiet guest and the guest who needs to unburden. You play along with the first without monopolizing them; the second gets impeccable service and peace; the third, genuine listening and prudence — you listen to everything, give few opinions and repeat nothing (the discretion of lesson 20 lives above all at the bar).
- 4. The limit, with elegance.** The guest who has had too much to drink is handled with respect and firmness: a slower pace, water offered and the "no" served without humiliation — in a low voice, without an audience, with an alternative ("let me make you something alcohol-free and we'll keep chatting"). If the situation escalates, you give notice according to protocol — never handle it alone out of pride.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Fully stocked back bar	A short list becomes a signature list: mastering what you have, two house creations well presented and the honesty of the alternative ("I don't have that one; try this, it's along the same lines"). The guest forgives the absence; they don't forgive the shrug.
Time (a swamped bar)	Conversation is replaced by eye contact and the name: three seconds of recognition per guest keep the bar human even when your hands are flying.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Greet whoever arrives even if you can't serve them yet. Remember the returning guest's drink. Listen without judging and keep quiet about what you heard.	Get absorbed with one guest and neglect the bar. Give opinions on politics, the hotel or other guests. Speed up the drinking of someone who shouldn't.	Serve someone who clearly shouldn't keep drinking, however good the tip. Repeat outside what was told at the bar: the bar is a confessional with ice.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Showing off technique while ignoring the guest: a show without a host is a circus, not a bar.
- ◆ Treating the dining-room order as an interruption: that ticket is a guest too — you just can't see them.
- ◆ Unrequested familiarity: the guest sets the humor and the closeness; you go along with them.
- ◆ Handling excess in front of an audience: humiliating firmness turns a one-drink problem into an incident that ends up in a review.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“The bar is a confessional with ice:
you hear everything, you repeat nothing.”**

This lesson's exercise

A full bar: a new guest waiting on their feet, two regulars mid-conversation with you and a dining-room order running five minutes late. Put your next minute and a half in order: what you do, in what order, and what your face says at each step. In the answer that follows, I share my version.