



5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job

—Young Workers in Restaurants and Food Service—



1. Get safety training
2. Look for hazards in your workplace
3. Follow safety rules
4. Know your rights
5. Ask questions and get help

TRUE STORIES

Cooks and servers in restaurants can make good money. But food service work is often fast and stressful. There are lots of safety problems to watch out for. Find out what to do so you don't get hurt, like these young workers did....

“It was my second week on the job. I slipped on the wet floor and fell right on my tailbone. I couldn't walk for two weeks, and couldn't play soccer the rest of the season.”



“I was chopping up vegetables. Nobody showed me how to do it quickly without getting hurt, and the boss kept shouting at me. I cut my finger badly and couldn't work for three days.”

“I had to change the oil in the deep fat fryer. We didn't have time to let it cool. When I was carrying it to dump it out, I slipped and dumped the hot oil all over my legs and feet. I was seriously burned and still have scars.”



It's your boss' job to make sure your workplace is safe!

This factsheet is for young people who work in restaurants. U.S. laws require employers to provide *all* workers with a safe place to work. There are also laws that give special protection to *younger* workers. Not all employers know about or follow these laws, and the laws are not always enforced. But it is important for you to know what your employer *should* do.

In restaurant or food service work, your boss can do a lot to improve safety. For example, your boss should:

- Make sure the stoves, ovens, grills, and fryers are safe and have no fuel leaks or electrical problems.
- Give you gloves or mitts to keep you from getting burned.
- Make sure there's no clutter or things to trip on.
- Have non-slip floor mats in areas that could get wet and slippery.
- Provide cleaning products that do not hurt your skin or cause headaches.
- Give you the proper gloves if you have to use strong cleaning chemicals.

It's your job to follow the 5 steps for staying safe!

1. Get safety training

The boss must train you to do *every* task that's part of your job, like how to handle any chemicals you need to use, how to lift safely, or how to use knives or other tools safely. Your boss should also teach you what to do if there is a robbery, crime, or abuse from a customer.

2. Look for hazards in your workplace

When you prepare or serve food, there are many things that can hurt you. Use the chart on the next page for ideas about what to watch out for.

3. Follow safety rules

Use your training to protect yourself and other workers. Do every task the way you have been trained. Keep your eyes open and report any problems you see.

4. Know your rights

U.S. and state laws protect workers on the job. There are also special laws that protect workers under 18. These laws say:

- Employers must provide a safe workplace.
- Employers must provide workers' compensation to pay your medical expenses and lost wages if you get injured.
- Workers under 18 may not do certain dangerous tasks, and may only work certain hours (not too late, too early, or too long).

For more information go to www.youthrules.dol.gov or www.osha.gov/SLR/teenworkers.

5. Ask questions and get help

Pay attention. If something seems unsafe, ask about it. If you don't know how to do a task you are given, ask a co-worker or your boss for help. If that does not work, get help from someone else, such as a safety or union representative, teacher, or parent. For more information, contact:

- National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, www.youngworkers.org.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Teen Workers page, www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, www.youth.eeoc.gov.
- Your state labor dept., www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm or your state OSHA, www.osha.gov/dcsp.osp.

The *5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job* series includes an overview pamphlet on young worker job safety and specific factsheets on:

- Construction
- Agricultural Field Work
- Hotel Cleaning
- Restaurants & Food Service
- Motor Vehicle Repair
- Working in Shops & Stores

Restaurant Hazards

	HAZARDS	WHAT YOU CAN DO
BURNS	Stove tops, ovens, broilers, grills, wood fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set pot handles away from burners, and so they don't stick out. • Do not fill pots too full. • Get help when moving heavy, hot pots. • Wear long sleeves. • Use potholders, gloves, or mitts.
	Hot oil or grease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry off wet food and brush off ice crystals before lowering into oil. • Do not stand too close to hot oil, or lean over it. • Do not strain or carry hot oil. Wait until it is cool.
CUTS	Knives, other cutting tools,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep knives sharp. Dull knives make you push harder and then they can slip. • Never leave knives soaking in water. • If you are cutting a lot, wear cut-resistant gloves that fit well, provided by the boss.
	Broken glass, broken dishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When cleaning up broken glass, use a dustpan and broom. • Have a separate container for broken glass. • Never crush garbage bags since there may be sharp objects you can't see.
FALLS	Slippery and cluttered floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up spills immediately. • Clean floors regularly so grease does not build up. • Never run or move too fast. • Wear shoes with non-skid soles.
BODY STRAIN	Lifting, bending, and reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a ladder or footstool to reach objects up high. Never stand on a box or cart. • Get help when lifting heavy items. • Follow these safe lifting methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bend your legs, not your back, when you pick up something heavy. • Hold the heavy item close to your body. • Move to face the heavy object before you lift instead of twisting your body.
	Standing or walking a lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take regular breaks. • Wear cushioned shoes. • Stand on a mat.
CHEMICALS	Dishwashing and cleaning products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for information about the chemicals you use. • Read labels and follow instructions before using. • Wear goggles and gloves when needed. Your boss should provide them.
OTHER	Electric shocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not touch or plug in electrical equipment with wet hands. • Do not use equipment that has a frayed cord or is damaged. Tell your boss about it.
	Robberies and assaults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not count cash in front of customers. • Make sure back doors are locked at night (but workers should still be able to exit). • Do not resist during an attempted robbery. • Never run after someone who has not paid or has stolen something.
	Angry or abusive customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are being yelled at or harassed by customers, get help from your boss.