

COME IN, WE'RE OPEN

COVID-19 Reopening Guidelines for Restaurants

YOUR REOPENING CHECKLIST



INTRODUCTION

Come in, We're Open: COVID-19 Reopening Guidelines for Restaurants

As individual states and the federal government begin to roll back social distancing mandates, restaurants in a growing number of areas have been permitted to resume offering on-premise dining. This checklist will help you prepare your restaurant – from the back office to the host stand – for the day you can reopen your doors and welcome your customers back for a long awaited visit.

The following content is for informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, accounting, tax, HR, or other professional advice. You are responsible for your own compliance with laws and regulations. Contact your attorney or other relevant advisor for advice specific to your circumstances.

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SECTION 1

Maintaining Compliance with Local and Federal Regulations

1. CONFIRM THAT YOU'RE LEGALLY ALLOWED TO REOPEN

Have you confirmed that your state has allowed restaurants to re-open and offer on-premise dining?

These guidelines and requirements will differ from state to state, so it is imperative that you check with the relevant office in your state in order to maintain compliance.

2. CHECK LOCAL GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING

Have you checked with your local government for specific guidelines around reopening your restaurant for business?

These guidelines and requirements will differ from state to state, so it is imperative that you check with the relevant office in your state in order to maintain compliance.

3. NOTE REGULATIONS ABOUT PERMISSIBLE CAPACITY

Have you made note of any local regulations that adjust your restaurant's capacity?

Some states are requiring restaurants to operate at 25% their typical capacity, while for others it's even lower at 10%. Figure out this capacity number early on, as it plays a huge role in planning the rest of your restaurant operations for opening.

RESOURCE

4. READ THE FDA'S COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES

Have you read the [FDA's Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic?](#)

Print a copy to have in your restaurant for reference and require that your staff also read in full.

RESOURCE

5. READ THE CDC'S REOPENING GUIDANCE

Have you read the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes?](#)

RESOURCE

6. REVIEW OSHA'S COVID-19 GUIDELINES

Have you reviewed [OSHA's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19?](#)

RESOURCE

7. REVIEW THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S SAFETY ALERT

Have you reviewed [The Department of Labor's safety alert](#) related to food and beverage businesses offering takeout and delivery?

RESOURCE

8. REVISE YOUR SOPS

Have you revised your standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure you're maintaining compliance with all local COVID-19 restaurant regulations?

[Read this guide](#) to learn more about creating and revising your SOPs.

Congrats, you finished **Maintaining Compliance with Local and Federal Regulations!**

SECTION 2

Metrics and KPI's

1. PULL FEBRUARY 2020 SALES REPORTS

Have you pulled sales reports from February 2020?

This will give you an accurate picture of which menu items were most popular and least popular before the crisis hit.

2. CALCULATE ADJUSTED BREAK EVEN POINT

Have you calculated your adjusted break even point?

This will give you an idea of how much you will need to do in sales to earn back the money you invested in your dining experience.

The equation for break even point is: $\text{Total Fixed Costs} \div ((\text{Total Sales} - \text{Total Variable Costs}) / \text{Total Sales}) = \text{Break Even Point}$

3. CALCULATE ADJUSTED OVERHEAD RATE

Have you calculated your adjusted overhead rate?

This calculation will be based on your new capacity requirements, projected sales, inventory availability, and how many staff members you plan to have working during a shift.

The formula to calculate overhead rate is: $\text{Total Indirect (Fixed) Costs} / \text{Total Amount of Hours Open} = \text{Overhead Rate}$

4. UPDATE YOUR PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT

Have you updated your restaurant's **profit and loss statement** for the months of March and April?

It's a good idea to do so even if your business was closed due to coronavirus restrictions.

Congrats, you finished **Metrics and KPI's!**

SECTION 3

Menu, Inventory, and Purchasing

1. START CONVERSATIONS WITH VENDORS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Have you reached out to your vendors and distributors to start inventory purchasing conversations?

2. TAKE STOCK OF INGREDIENT AVAILABILITY AND PRICE CHANGES

Have you made note of which ingredients or products are not available or out of your budget?

It's very likely you will need to adjust your recipes in light of changes to ingredient availability. Work with your vendors and distributors to research suitable alternatives.

3. CREATE MINIMUM VIABLE MENU

Have you created your minimum viable menu (MVM) based on customer sales data and inventory availability?

Your MVM is an abbreviated version of your menu whose items offset overhead throughout the business and give customers attractive options. [Check out this guide](#) to learn more about creating a minimum viable menu.

4. DISCARD EXPIRED FOOD ITEMS

Have you discarded any out-of-date or expired food items?

Make sure to reorder any expired ingredients.

5. PURCHASE SINGLE-USE CONDIMENTS

Have you ordered single use condiments?

Many states are forbidding the use of communal condiments.

SHOPPING LIST

6. CHECK CLEANING PRODUCT EXPIRATIONS

Have you checked the expiration date on all cleaning products in your restaurant?

Make sure to dispose of and reorder any expired products.

SHOPPING LIST

7. GET EPA-APPROVED DISINFECTANTS

Have you purchased [EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19](#), if possible?

SHOPPING LIST

8. ADDITIONAL DISINFECTANT OPTIONS

If an EPA-approved disinfectant against COVID-19 is not available to your restaurant, have you invested in one of the following suitable alternatives?

1) 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water, which is ~4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water, or, 2) 70% alcohol solutions. Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in.

SHOPPING LIST

9. ORDER SINGLE-USE GLOVES AND MASKS

Have you ordered single-use, disposable gloves and back-up masks for staff?

Staff may be permitted to also bring their own masks, which they must leave behind in the restaurant after each shift.

SHOPPING LIST

10. STOCK UP ON CLEANING SUPPLIES

Have you stocked up on the following cleaning supplies?

- Paper products such as toilet paper, paper towels, and napkins
- Surface and glass spray cleaners
- Clean cloths or rags
- Steel wool pads
- EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19 (if unavailable, the EPA advises the purchase bleach or 70% alcohol solutions)
- Stainless steel cleaner
- Commercial dishwasher detergent
- Degreaser
- Hand soap
- Food prep gloves
- Broom
- Mop
- Bucket
- Trash bags
- Power washer
- Stiff bristle deck brush
- Surface spray cleaners
- Several clean bar rags
- Vacuum for carpeted areas and hard-to-reach nooks
- Bathroom cleaner
- Toilet brush

SHOPPING LIST

11. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR RESTAURANT'S LAUNDRY SERVICE

If your restaurant uses linens (tablecloths, napkins, aprons, etc.), have you touched base with your restaurant laundry service about availability and changes?

Congrats, you finished **Menu, Inventory, and Purchasing!**

SECTION 4

Restaurant Staff Management

1. COMMUNICATE YOUR REOPENING TO STAFF

Have you communicated with staff that you're choosing to, or not to, reopen, and when?

2. OFFICIALLY REHIRE OR REINSTATE STAFF

If you laid off staff or terminated your employees, have you officially rehired or reinstated these employees?

For additional considerations and tasks to address – including benefits, paid sick leave, and the Payroll Protection program – [click here for payroll and team management guidance](#) from Toast's HR Services team.

3. UPDATE YOUR PAYROLL SYSTEM

Have you added re-hired or newly active employees to your payroll system?

Depending on which system you use, you may need to re-add these employees direct deposit information, benefits deductions, child support deductions, and the like. If you have employees returning from furlough, make sure they're checked as active in your payroll system.

4. REISSUE I-9S

Have you reissued an I-9 to re-hired employees?

Depending on the employee's original date of hire, employers may need to re-complete form I-9 or at the very least complete Section 3 of the I-9 to re-verify employment eligibility. For guidance on the exact situations that you encounter for rehires, check out this [guidance from USCIS](#).

5. HAVE EMPLOYEES SIGN STATE AND FEDERAL W-4S

Have re-hired employees signed a state and federal W-4?

A W-4 Form must be completed by all employees working in the U.S. so that the employer knows how much to withhold from the employee's paycheck for federal income taxes. On the federal level, a new form W-4 was released in 2020, so all 2020 hires are required to complete the updated form.

6. SHARE WAGE NOTICE/NOTIFICATION OF STATUS CHANGE

Have you issued a wage notice/notification of status change to re-hired employees and/or employees returning from furlough?

Many states require employers to share a written wage notice with employees when they experience a change in status, hourly rate, or other update to their position. Even if employees are being rehired to the same position/ wage that they previously had, employers should ensure that all employees e-sign off on their position attributes and hourly rate. If this is a tipped employee, they should also receive a notice indicating the tip credit and the tip pooling practices of the restaurant.

7. UPDATE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Have you updated your employee's job descriptions?

Many positions have changed due to cuts or necessary business restructuring during the pandemic. As you are looking to bring employees back to work, if the essential functions of a role have changed, update the job description to match the change in business need.

8. REQUEST UPDATED AVAILABILITY FROM STAFF

Have you asked each staff member to submit their updated availability?

This way you can accommodate employees who may have different responsibilities at home in light of COVID-19.

9. CREATE AN EMPLOYEE SCHEDULE

Have you created an employee schedule for your first two weeks open based on projected volume and your locally-mandated capacity in mind?

[Use this employee scheduling template.](#) Remember: Predictive scheduling laws typically mandate 2 weeks advance notice on schedules for shift workers. As you create your schedule for weeks three and four, make tweaks based on what worked and what didn't during your first week. Consider implementing staggered shifts for all possible workers.

10. CREATE PLAN IN CASE EMPLOYEES REFUSE TO RETURN

Have you thought through a plan for employees who refuse to come back to work for fear of COVID-19?

While fear of the pandemic itself is not a valid reason to refrain from returning to work, create an open, interactive dialogue with employees to better understand if they have a condition that is cause for a valid concern during these times.

It is possible that, even if the employee does not normally require an accommodation for a medical condition, their concerns could be protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These conversations should be handled on a case by case basis in order to avoid any potential claims of discrimination to the EEOC or applicable state agency. Review this [guidance from the EEOC](#) when determining how to handle specific situations.

11. ADJUST YOUR STAFF SCHEDULING STRATEGY

Have you thought through how you will staff your restaurant each shift in order to keep the restaurant clean and limit interactions between your staff and the public?

Consider scheduling staff members in one of three groups: customer-facing, back of house, or cleaning crew. Customer-facing employees will seat and serve guests; back of house staff will operate the back of house; cleaning crew will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting the restaurant before, during, and after the shift.

12. ADJUST SHIFT-START TIMES

Have you considered requiring all staff to come in early to clean the restaurant before the shift starts, and scheduling more closers to ensure the restaurant is clean at the end of the day?

Scheduling a group of staff to clean the restaurant would also suffice.

13. UPDATE YOUR EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Have you revisited your [restaurant employee handbook](#)?

With the help of your managers and legal counsel, make sure to incorporate local and federal guidelines around COVID-19 safety protocol. Consider working with a hospitality-focused HR consultant, like [Toast's HR Services Team](#), if you have questions about more employee-related concerns related to resuming operations after COVID-19. Once you have an updated version, share it with your staff for them to review thoroughly.

14. COMMUNICATE THE CDC'S GUIDELINES TO STAFF

Have you communicated [the CDC's guidelines](#) to your staff as it relates to employees who exhibit signs of illness or COVID-19 symptoms?

They include: An employee with known or suspected COVID-19 must follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to self-isolate for at least seven (7) days after symptom onset and end isolation only after symptoms have improved and the employee has been fever-free and/or symptom-free for three (3) consecutive days without medication before returning to work. Any staff member who exhibits signs of illness, has knowingly been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has displayed symptoms of COVID-19 must not report to work, remain home, and consider immediately seeking medical attention.

15. CREATE A SAFE PLACE FOR STAFF BELONGINGS

Have you created a safe place where staff can leave their personal belongings during a shift?

Storing these personal belongings in an area away from the kitchen or the floor will prevent any outside contamination from harming your guests or staff.

16. CREATE REGULATIONS AROUND STAFF BREAK AREAS

If you have a staff break area, have you communicated to staff that there will be a cap on the amount of staff who are allowed to idle or rest in the area?

This will reduce the risk of germs being spread between staff members.

17. RESTRICT PERSONAL PHONE USAGE

Have you updated your policy on personal phone usage?

Scientists at the University of Arizona found that mobile phones carry 10x more bacteria than most toilet seats. Besides distracting your staff, phones could also bring potentially harmful bacteria into your restaurant. Ask that staff store phones away for the duration of the shift.

Congrats, you finished **Restaurant Staff Management!**

SECTION 5

Marketing Your Restaurant's Reopening

1. ANNOUNCE YOUR REOPENING TO CUSTOMERS

Have you announced your reopening date to your customers and loyalty/rewards program members via email, and your social media channels?

If you don't have a particular date set for your re-opening, it's still worth communicating to guests and the public that you intend to reopen soon.

2. UPDATE YOUR HOURS OF OPERATION ONLINE

Have you updated your restaurant's hours of operation on Google, Yelp, TripAdvisor, and anywhere else your restaurant has a business listing?

3. COMMUNICATE YOUR SAFETY PROTOCOL TO GUESTS

Have you shared with customers and the public the specific steps you're taking to make sure your on-premise dining experience is safe?

It's worth including any requests you have of guests – like wearing face coverings and maintaining a safe distance from other individuals – when they're visiting your restaurant to make sure everyone on-site is having a safe experience.

4. CONTINUE TO MARKET YOUR ONLINE ORDERING TO GUESTS

Have you shared across your network that online-ordering and off-premise dining options are still available?

Guests may not feel comfortable coming in for a visit, but that shouldn't stop them from ordering and enjoying a meal wherever they're quarantined.

5. ENCOURAGE RESERVATIONS AND CALL-AHEAD SEATING

Have you encouraged guests to make reservations or call-ahead for seating?

Encouraging reservations and call-ahead seating will prevent guests from idling or congregating around your restaurant and potentially contaminating the space. For these same reasons, it's worth considering refusing walk-in's, if your concept allows (exceptions being counter service and QSRs). Consider taking this a step further by asking guests to text the host upon arrival so that they can immediately be taken to their seats.

Congrats, you finished **Marketing Your Restaurant's Reopening!**

SECTION 6

Restaurant Staff Training

1. ENSURE FOOD & SAFETY MANAGER CERTIFICATIONS ARE UP-TO-DATE

Do all staff members with a required [Food Safety Manager certification](#) have an up-to-date certification?

2. ENSURE FOOD HANDLING CERTIFICATIONS ARE UP-TO-DATE

Do all staff members with a required [Food Handling certification](#) have an up-to-date certification?

3. UPDATE YOUR RESTAURANT TRAINING MANUAL

Have you created an amended version of your [restaurant training manual](#) that educates your staff about proper safety protocol in light of COVID-19 restaurant regulations?

Share this updated training manual with your staff prior to their first shift to review. This way, everyone will show up to their first shift equipped with the insights needed to keep themselves safe.

4. UPDATE YOUR SERVER SIDE-WORK CHECKLIST

Have you amended your [server side-work checklist](#) to incorporate cleaning protocol and procedures outlined in your local COVID-19 restaurant regulations?

5. CREATE FRONT-OF-HOUSE & BACK-OF-HOUSE CLEANING CHECKLISTS

Have you created a unique restaurant cleaning checklist for each section in the front- and back of house?

Check out our guide on [how to clean a restaurant](#) for a full list of what to clean in the front- and back-of-house.

6. REQUIRE STAFF TO WEAR MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

Have you communicated to staff that they are required to wear a mask (preferred) or face covering during the length of their shift?

Staff must also disinfect their masks at the end of each shift and leave their masks in the restaurant.

7. REQUIRE STAFF TO WEAR GLOVES

Have you communicated to staff that they are required to wear single-use gloves, and dispose of used gloves after anything is handled?

This includes delivering an order, preparing an order, or collecting used tableware and cutlery.

8. TRAIN STAFF TO CLEAN SEATING OPTIONS BETWEEN USE

Have you trained staff that each seating option should be cleaned after a customer has left?

This includes the table, chair/seat, under the table, and the area around the table.

9. TRAIN STAFF TO NEVER MIX BLEACH & AMMONIA-BASED PRODUCTS

Have you trained staff to never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser?

Doing so could result in the creation of toxic fumes.

10. TRAIN STAFF TO DISINFECT HIGH-TRAFFIC SURFACES

Have you trained staff that they must disinfect high-traffic surfaces regularly throughout the shift?

These include tabletops, counter tops, seats, booths, point of sale terminals, check presenters, doorknobs, handles, light switches, toilets, faucets, sinks, paper towel holders, hand dryer handles and nozzles, etc.

11. TRAIN STAFF TO USE DISINFECTANTS PROPERLY

Have you trained staff that disinfectant solution must be left on the unclean surface for at least 1 minute?

12. ESTABLISH NEW DELIVERY INTAKE PROTOCOL

Have you created a new intake protocol for all deliveries made to your restaurant?

This should include disinfecting protocol, unpacking protocol, storing protocol, and protocol for disposal of delivery containers/materials.

13. TRAIN STAFF TO WASH HANDS BETWEEN GUEST INTERACTIONS

Have you communicated to staff that they must wash and/or disinfect their hands after every interaction with another person?

Make hand sanitizing stations readily available throughout the restaurant, but also encourage staff to bring their own to keep on their person.

14. TRAIN STAFF TO KEEP APPROPRIATE DISTANCE FROM GUESTS

Have you trained staff to stand at least one foot away from the table when interacting with guests?

15. TRAIN ON SERVING ORDERS TABLESIDE

Have you trained staff to set up a tray on a tray stand at the end of each table for serving orders?

FOH staff can then leave the table's orders on the tray stand and the guests can pick up the dishes off the tray to mitigate physical contact between staff and guests.

16. TRAIN STAFF TO CLEAN TABLESIDE TRAY STANDS

Have you trained staff to wipe down the tray stand after each order is dropped off or used tableware is picked up?

17. TRAIN STAFF TO PROMOTE CONTACTLESS PAYMENT

Have you trained staff to communicate to guests that contactless and mobile payment methods are preferred over card?

Limit or refuse cash, if possible.

Congrats, you finished **Restaurant Staff Training!**

SECTION 7

The Dining Experience

1. ATTACH A CLEAR DIVIDER TO THE HOST STAND

Have you put a clear divider (plexi-glass or other clear material) on the front of the host stand?

Ask that guests stand on one side of the glass, and host staff on the other.

2. CONSIDER INSTITUTING CONTACTLESS TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Have you considered instituting contactless temperature checks for anyone entering the restaurant?

Many businesses reopening are choosing to institute temperature checks for guests, staff, and delivery providers entering their establishment as a precautionary measure. There are a number of contactless and no-touch thermometers available for purchase.

3. CREATE CUSTOMER HAND-SANITIZING STATIONS

Have you made customer-only hand-sanitizing stations available?

Contactless hand-sanitizing stations are preferable.

4. DISPLAY SIGNAGE DETAILING COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOL

Have you displayed signage throughout your restaurant that details your cleaning and COVID-19 safety protocols?

5. HIGHLIGHT SAFETY ASKS FOR GUESTS ON SIGNAGE

Have you placed signs throughout your restaurant, and on or near each table, that details what you ask of guests during their visit to your restaurant?

Safety is a two-way street! These signs should also include asks for guests to wear face coverings, practice social-distancing, and disinfect their hands regularly.

6. PLACE SOCIAL-DISTANCING MARKERS ON SIDEWALK

Have you put X's or markers on the walkway outside your restaurant's entrance six feet apart to guide guests waiting outside and remind them to follow social distancing guidelines?

No guests should be allowed to wait or idle inside your restaurant.

7. ADJUST THE FLOOR PLAN

Have you adjusted your floor plan in light of your local government's capacity mandates?

8. CONFIGURE SEATING TO BE 6 FEET APART

Have you adjusted seating options (tables, booths, barstools) so that they're six feet apart from one another?

If your restaurant has built-in booths, seat parties in every other booth.

9. CONSIDER ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SEPARATE SEATS

If six feet of separation between seating options is not possible, have you adopted other separation tactics, including partitions or room dividers?

You must clean and sanitize these areas more frequently than those which are spaced six feet apart.

10. PLACE SOCIAL DISTANCING INDICATORS ON THE FLOOR

Have you taped six foot squares on the floor around seating options?

This highlights no-go areas for guests and servers not included in the party.

11. CLEARLY INDICATE WALKWAYS AND SHARED SPACES

Have you used tape to outline a walkway to the bathroom(s) and to the exits?

This will help staff and guests maintain a safe distance from other parties.

12. CREATE SINGLE-USE TABLE SETTINGS

Have you instituted pre-rolled silverware and eliminated pre-setting tables?

13. CONSIDER INCORPORATING SINGLE-USE MENUS

Have you switched to single-use, printed menus, if possible?

If not, train staff to thoroughly disinfect reusable menus between each party.

14. ELIMINATE SELF-SERVING STATIONS

Have you removed any self-serving options from the dining experience?

Examples include self-pouring beer technology, buffets, salad bars, and get-it-yourself silverware and condiment stations.

15. SWITCH TO DIGITAL RECEIPTS

Have you switched to digital receipts?

Digital receipts are a safe, reliable option that prevents hand-to-hand contact between staff and guests. You can also customize digital receipts to promote your restaurant's website, loyalty program, and social media channels enabling you to stay in touch with guests.

16. COLLECT GUEST FEEDBACK

Have you created a survey or questionnaire to collect guest feedback?

Now, more than ever, [guest feedback](#) is vital to the success of your reopening efforts. Make sure to touch base with guests about their dining experience and ask for ways you could improve in the future or make them feel even more safe.

Congrats, you finished **The Dining Experience!**

YOU'RE READY TO GO!

You've crossed off everything on your reopening to-do list, armed your team with insights and training, and now are ready to safely welcome guests back for an in person visit. As with any new additions to your restaurant operations, keep an eye on how things go the first few days and make tweaks where necessary. Guest and staff feedback will be key to ensuring everyone is having the safest, stress-free experience possible.



We're in this together.

Toast is the restaurant technology provider of choice for restaurants navigating the reopening process.

[Talk to a member of our team](#) to learn how we can support you on the road to recovery.

[Learn More](#)