

Lesson 9 – Restaurants:

Ordering, Paying, & Describing

Today we'll continue our restaurant lesson by learning how to order the food, how to pay the bill, and how to talk about your experience at the restaurant.

Conversation #1 – Ordering food

Server: Are you ready to order?

William: Yes, I'll have the steak and a side order of green beans.

Server: And how would you like your steak?

William: Medium.

Server: That also comes with a choice of soup or salad.

William: What soups do you have?

Server: Minestrone, chicken noodle, and split pea.

William: Minestrone, please.

(minestrone soup is a vegetable soup that sometimes has pasta or rice in it)

Server: And what can I get for you, ma'am?

Emily: What are today's specials?

Server: We have a grilled chicken sandwich with French fries, broiled flounder fillet, and sweet and spicy pork chops.

Emily: I'll have the pork chops – could you make it not too spicy, please?



Server: No problem. Would you like rice, baked potato, or pasta?

Emily: Baked potato.

Server: All right. And can I get you anything to start off?

Emily: Hmmm... we'll share a plate of cheese sticks.

Server: Sure.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

The server will come to your table and ask you one of these questions:

- **“Are you ready to order?”**
- **“Can I take your order?”**
- **“Do you need a little more time to decide?”**

If you need more time, then you can reply:

- **“Could you give us a few more minutes, please?”**

If you are ready to order, then ask for your food beginning with:

- **“I’ll have...”**
 - ...the steak and a side order of green beans.
 - ...the pork chops.

When the server asks, **“How would you like your steak?”** she wants to know how much you want the meat to be cooked. There are 3 basic levels (from least cooked to most cooked):

- **Rare** – Red on the inside
- **Medium** – A little bit pink on the inside
- **Well-done** – Completely brown on the inside

You can also order **“medium-rare”** (which is in between medium and rare) or **“medium-well”** (which is in between medium and well-done) – [click here for a picture](#).

When the server asks, **“Can I get you anything to start off?”** she wants to know if you will have any appetizers. Again, you can ask for an appetizer starting with “I’ll have...” – or you can say **“We’ll share...”** or **“We’ll split...”** to tell the server that you and your friend will divide one item.

While you are eating, the waiter/waitress will often come to your table and ask “Is everything OK?” to check if you need anything. Here are some possible answers:

- **“Yes, everything’s fine, thanks.”**
- **“It’s all delicious!”**
- **“Could we have some more water, please?”**
“Could we have...” is a polite way to ask for something.
- **“Actually, I’m still waiting for my side dish.”**
- **“I ordered chicken noodle soup, not tomato soup.”**
If you received the wrong dish, use this phrase: “I ordered ..., not...”
- **“To be honest, my food is cold.”**
“To be honest...” is a diplomatic way to introduce a complaint or negative comment.

Conversation #2 – Asking for the check and paying

Server: Can I get you anything else – any coffee or dessert?

William: No thanks. Could you wrap this up for me?

Server: Sure, no problem.

William: Could we also get the check, please?

Server: Here you go.

William: Excuse me – there’s a mistake on our bill. We didn’t order any chicken wings.

Server: Sorry about that – I’ll take it off.

William: And we only ordered two sodas, but we were charged for three.

Server: Oh, that's because you had one refill.

William: Ah. What's this extra \$5?

Server: That's the cover charge for the musicians.

William: OK. Do you take MasterCard?

Server: Yes we do. Thank you, sir – have a nice evening.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In American restaurants, it's typical for the server to offer coffee or dessert after you finish the main meal. If you do want dessert, then say, **"Yes, can I see the dessert menu?"**

If you don't eat all your food and you want to take the leftovers home, you can ask the server:

- **"Can you wrap this up for me?"**
- **"Can I get a box for this?"**

The **check** or the **bill** is the list of items you ordered and the total price to pay. Here are some phrases for talking about it:

- **"Could we get the check, please?"**
- **"Could we have separate checks, please?"**

Use this phrase if you are eating with a friend or a group of people, and you want separate checks so that each person can pay individually.

- **"There's a mistake on our bill."**
- **"What's this \$5 charge for?"**

MACSWEENEYS FLB INV.			
RUE JEAN STAS 24, 1060 BXL			
TVA BE 0458.001.138 RPM BXL			
17/06/2006	14:35	CLERK0002	[0002]
GLU# 68			
1x CHICKEN BURGER	9.50		9.50
1x SALMON	10.75		10.75
1x CORDON BLEU	10.95		10.95
3x SOFT	2.10		6.30
CASH			37.50

The word **refill** is when you get more of a drink (like soda or juice) after you've finished drinking your first cup. In some restaurants, refills are free. In other restaurants – like the one in the conversation – you have to pay for each refill as a separate drink.

Finally, if there is **live music** at the restaurant, there may be a small **cover charge** added to your bill. This money helps pay the musicians.

Cultural tip: Leaving a tip

In American restaurants, you need to **leave a tip** (pay extra money for the service). It's customary to tip approximately 15% for satisfactory service, 20% for good service, and 25% for excellent service.

If you are paying in cash, you can just leave the extra money on the table when you leave, and the server will collect it later. If you are paying with a credit card, there will be a space on the bill for you to write the amount of the tip, and then add it to the subtotal to make the final total, for example:

Subtotal: \$35.00

Tip: _____

Total: _____

If the service was good, you can leave a tip of 20% – so you would write \$7.00 for the tip and \$42.00 for the total.

Conversation #3: Talking about your experience at a restaurant

Michelle: I'm thinking about trying that seafood place on Market Street. Have you ever been there?

Kevin: Yeah... but I wouldn't recommend it.

Michelle: Oh really? Why not?

Kevin: Well - the portions are pretty big, but... the food is just kinda bland. And the last time I went there, the french fries were really greasy and the salad wasn't fresh.

Michelle: Hmm, that's not very appetizing. I guess I'll eat somewhere else!

Kevin: If you like seafood, you should try Francisco's on 14th Street. It's a little bit pricey, but everything on the menu is delicious.

Michelle: Oh yeah, I took my sister there on Saturday. It has a nice atmosphere... it gets a little noisy on the weekends. But the service was great and the food was amazing.

Kevin: My boss is a regular at Francisco's - he takes clients there for lunch at least twice a week.

Michelle: It's a nice place. The chef is very talented.



Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In this dialogue, Kevin and Michelle comment on four aspects of their restaurant experiences: the quality of the food, the size of the portions, the service, and the general environment of the restaurant. Here are some phrases for criticizing and complimenting restaurants:

Negative Comments:

- **"The service was slow."**
This means it took a long time for you to get your food, and for the server to pay attention to your table.
- **"The servers were not very friendly."**
- **"The food was overpriced / a bit pricey."**
"overpriced" means "too expensive," and "a bit pricey" means "a little bit expensive, but not extremely expensive."
- **"The food was too salty / greasy / spicy."**
greasy = full of fat/oil
- **"The food was bland / tasteless."**
this phrase means the food had no flavor
- **"The food wasn't fresh."**
- **"The portions were too small."**
- **"The place was too noisy."**

Positive Comments:

- **"The food was delicious / tasty."**
- **"The service was great."**
- **"The servers were friendly and helpful."**
- **"It has a nice ambience/atmosphere."**
- **"The décor is interesting."**
décor is a word for the decoration of a room
- **"The portions were big / satisfying."**
- **"The prices were reasonable."**
reasonable = fair, OK
- **"The chef is very talented."**

You've finished Lesson 9 of the Everyday English Speaking Course! Today's speaking challenge is to leave me a message telling me about your favorite restaurant.

- What kind of food is on the menu?
- What do you usually order when you go there?
- How's the service and the atmosphere?

[Click here](#) to leave me a voice message, and I'll send you some tips on your speaking.