

DISCOVER

# THE 25% TIP SYSTEM



*Behavior-based serving strategies to consistently increase your tips—without flirting, overworking, or relying on luck.*

# The 25% Tip System

## Introduction

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Hi! Thanks for purchasing The 25% Tip System!

In this ebook, I'm going to be walking you through the exact steps it takes to approach every table with confidence by using the 60-second Table R.E.A.D. technique.

Before you start working through this ebook, you will want to make sure to have read the materials you received when you first signed up for my email list, The Behavioral Field Guide for Servers. You should be able to find this 9-page PDF document in your email but for some reason, if you don't have it, you can sign up for a free instant download at [BeTipped.com](http://BeTipped.com).

The info in that packet is the introduction to this ebook. In that packet, I introduced you to the table READ method and to the most common types of tables. Now we are going to talk about how to apply that knowledge in your daily work.

This ebook is for you if...

- ⇒ You are experiencing tips that average less than 20%.
- ⇒ You're feeling like you are not a good server.
- ⇒ You feel awkward and cringy trying to upsell your tables.
- ⇒ You want to approach every table with confidence and know exactly how to guide their services so that they leave satisfied.

Seeing as you have purchased this book, I can tell you are someone who wants to be better at what you do. I imagine that you probably work very hard, doing everything you've been told to be a better server. You smile, you show interest in your guests, you go the extra mile, offer upsells, keep waters full, and pre-bus your tables. But the table pays their bill, thanks you for taking good care of them, and leaves a 15% tip. Then you see your coworker goofing off, leaving their tables unattended, messing up orders, then getting a 30% tip.

You probably feel frustrated and defeated. Maybe you've even started to think you're just not a good server. Maybe you aren't pretty enough. Maybe you're too old. Maybe you just don't have the right personality to be a server. You blame everyone and

everything outside your control for your low earnings. I know exactly how you're feeling, which is why I spent years formalizing my techniques, what I call Behavior-Based Serving.

Because all those excuses are just that - excuses. The reality is you can learn to read the behavioral cues of each table and provide the exact type of service they want - even if they don't know how to explain it. You can learn to read behavioral cues and how to use this knowledge to improve the guests' dining experience.

What you probably don't know about me is that I spent almost 20 years as a social worker. I used behavioral analysis to help all kinds of people meet their goals. I came to see that many of the same concepts I used as a clinician could be applied to serving. Which is why I am now doing this training, because **behavior is communication.**

Once you learn to observe behavior and modify your approach to align with your guests' desires, you will see how easily you can create an environment where guests feel comfortable and considered. And that will translate into higher tips.

You'll become an expert in meeting people where they are, removing friction, reducing anxiety and tension, and using humor at all the right times. By the end of this book, you're going to be feeling so much better. You'll feel confident approaching every table every time. And it will show in your tips.

Imagine walking into your shift knowing exactly how each table will respond before they even order. That's what this gives you. Not confidence from hope. Confidence from pattern recognition. Are you ready to feel more confident that you know how to provide exactly what people need? That's your path to making better tips!

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# CHAPTER 1

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THE WHY

## Why Most Servers Stay Stuck at 18% — And How 25% Changes Everything

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Most servers believe tips are random, unpredictable, and largely out of their control.

They blame:

- Slow nights
- Cheap customers
- Bad sections
- The kitchen
- The economy

But here's the truth:

Tips are not random. They are emotional. And emotions can be influenced. Your ability to observe your guests, determine their priorities, and modify your behavior as a result has a direct impact on your tips.

I know this because I learned it the hard way.

### The Rise & Fall

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If you had told me ten years ago that I would be a career server today, I would not have believed you. I had never worked in a restaurant. I had worked my entire adult life in a very narrow niche field. I spent around 20 years working with people with disabilities.

I won't get into all of it, because it's not the point of this book, but I was incredibly successful at my job. I was well known, highly respected, and regarded as an expert in my field. I had built my whole identity around my job. For a long time, that worked. I put all my time and energy into my career. I had no hobbies. I didn't have an identity outside of work.

That became a problem eventually. The last position I had working in that field was a very challenging role. I was good at it, but it was dark. It was lonely. I investigated abuse and neglect allegations, and I reviewed all client deaths. Most days, I saw the worst of what people can do to each other. Sometimes it was physical abuse. Other times it was sexual abuse. Often it was criminal. It was always disturbing.

Along the way, I saw how systems break and put vulnerable people at risk. I watched people dehumanize others, then justify it. As a result, I learned to question everyone and trust nothing without proof. In short, I became cynical and jaded. Over time, I started to hate people. By the time I realized it, it felt too late.

So I searched for ways to cope with the trauma and the pain. That's when I developed a substance use problem. It happened fast. Even though I knew the science and the warning signs, my life became unrecognizable.

Just as I climbed the ranks with record speed, I destroyed my life even faster. And I didn't care. In a short time, I lost my job, my car, my home, my family, my dignity. I went from being a well-respected county mental health director to being a homeless drug addict with felony warrants out for my arrest.

That's not dramatic language. That's literal.

Eventually, I went to treatment. Then I relapsed.

Then I went to treatment again. This time, it stuck. So I started rebuilding. From nothing, literally nothing.

After a long stay in a treatment center, I moved into a sober living home. I owned nothing except the clothes people donated to me in treatment. Still, I kept putting one foot in front of the other. "One day at a time" isn't just an expression; it's a tether to reality.

I went to counseling. I worked the program. I did what the professionals told me to do. Slowly, I started to become someone I almost recognized.

## **The Embarrassment**

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Eventually, the next step was clear. I had to work again. I needed a job, not just for money, but for dignity.

A friend of mine worked as a chef in a family restaurant. He said he could probably get me hired. After a quick interview, they put me on the training schedule.

I'd never had a job like this. I found a secondhand pair of black dress pants. I borrowed money to buy non-slip shoes. Then I got on the city bus to go to work - a very different kind of work than I had ever known. I remember sitting on the bus feeling as if I might cry.

Not because I felt grateful or excited. I wanted to cry because I couldn't believe my life had veered so far off track that I was about to wear an apron and ask people if they wanted fries with that.

I felt embarrassed. After everything I'd been through, now I was refilling soda. I kept thinking, "What will people think?"

Then something unexpected happened. Within weeks, I realized serving wasn't that different from social work.

It was about reading people. Understanding dynamics. Adjusting energy. Listening closely. Matching what someone needs in the moment. It was human behavior, and I understood human behavior. I also knew how to influence it.

## **The Transition, A New Viewpoint**

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At first, I was just trying not to mess up. But then I started noticing patterns. Some servers made 18% in tips. Some made 20%. A few made 25% or more. And it wasn't random.

It wasn't because they were the cutest.

It wasn't because they flirted.

It wasn't because they were loud.

It was because they understood people.

## **Shift Reviews**

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At my first serving job, managers reviewed your money with you after each shift. Each server carried their own "bank." At the end of the night, you turned in credit card slips and found out how much cash you owed the restaurant. Then whatever cash was left was yours. The process was straightforward but detailed. Each server printed a shift report, counted their money, and reviewed it with the manager before leaving. Every credit card slip had to match. Any comps needed written notes.

At the time, I assumed every restaurant did this. Since leaving that first job, I haven't worked anywhere else that reviewed each shift's numbers like that. It helped me a lot, and I'm glad I learned that way. Each night, I studied my report. I learned where my income came from. I tracked what I sold (drinks, apps, specials, small tables vs. groups, early diners vs late nights).

Most importantly, I tracked my average tip percentage. That number matters more than almost any other. Of course, you want to know how much money you actually made. After all, you have to have enough income to pay your bills. But the tip

percentage shows more than just the bottom line. It can show improvement over time. It can show how your attitude impacts your income. It shows a lot.

To get your shift tipped percentage, do this:

1. Find your total sales (food, drinks, merch, anything you sell).
2. Find your total tips (cash and credit cards).
3. Divide tips by sales.

Don't do anything else. Don't take out money you owe in a tip-out. Don't deduct money you owe for food you're taking home. Just divide your tips by your sales. That is your true tipped percentage for that shift.

For example, say you sold \$1,000. You made \$189 in tips. Divide \$189 by \$1,000 to get 18.9%.

*Your tip percentage is the number that tells the truth.*

Here's a quick example of why the percentage is important. Sure, making \$200 on Tuesday is better than making \$180 on Wednesday. But, if you sold \$1000 in food & drink on Tuesday and you sold \$800 on Wednesday, which shift did you actually receive better tips?

Tuesday	Wednesday
$200 / 1000 = 20\%$	$180 / 800 = 22.5\%$

## The Truth About 25%

Here's what most servers miss. You can't control:

- The restaurant's popularity
- Your section size
- The economy
- The table count

But you can control how guests feel. And how a guest feels often controls whether they tip 18%, 20%, or 25% plus. Over time, that gap becomes thousands of dollars a year. It's not about working harder. It's about serving smarter. I call it behavior-based serving.

## Behavior Analysis

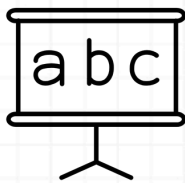
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To understand behavior-based serving, start with the basics of behavior analysis. Behavior analysis studies how people act and how they learn. People use it in schools, in autism services, and in many other settings. Here, we'll apply it to waiting tables.

These ideas matter most:

1. All behavior is communication. People tell us a lot by what they do, even when they say nothing.
2. To understand behavior, look at what happens before, during, and after it. Behavior doesn't happen in a vacuum. The setting shapes what people do.

In the field of Behavior Analysis, one of the most basic frameworks is the A-B-C Model of Behavior.



A = Antecedent (what happens before the behavior)

B = Behavior

C = Consequence (what happens after the behavior)

## How does this apply to waiting tables?

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After years of serving in both casual and fine dining, I realized I was doing something automatically. Something most servers never consciously learn, or at least rarely consciously recognize and articulate.

Before approaching a new table, I would take a few seconds and observe the guests and make some educated guesses about their motivations. That initial observation would shape how I interacted with them. Obviously, being flexible and adaptable is still important, but more often than not, I know what I need to know to earn a great tip very quickly.

This initial quick scan of the table is what I now call the 60-Second Table R.E.A.D. System™, the backbone of Behavior-Based Serving.



# CHAPTER 2

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THE TABLE R.E.A.D. METHOD

## Introducing The 60-Second Table R.E.A.D. System™

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We will go into each step in detail, but here's an overview:

### ❖ Recognize the Table Type

There are 7 common types of tables, and each requires a slightly different approach.

### ❖ Establish Structure

Understanding power dynamics sets the stage for the service to flow smoothly.

### ❖ Adjust Energy & Use Humor

You must be intentional about aligning with the existing dynamics or shifting the table's energy.

### ❖ Deliver Before Asked

This is largely the technical part of being a good server. This is the difference between "service" and "hospitality."

That's it. That's the system. It's not magic. It's behavioral analysis.

And it works in:

- Casual dining.
- Fine dining.
- High-end steakhouse.
- Family restaurants.

Because people are people.

The Table R.E.A.D. System will help you focus on these important areas:

- Emotional safety.
- Power dynamics.
- Decision anxiety.
- Timing.

### Practice Assignment

*Tonight, don't try to change everything. Just do this...*

From this point forward, I want you to stop seeing tables as, "Hopefully this is a good one." And start seeing them as "Another chance to test a strategy."

Every table is practice. Every interaction is data. Every shift is feedback. That's how professionals operate. That's how you will get consistent 25% tips.

Now, let's look much more closely at each step of the Table R.E.A.D. System.

R

## Recognize the Table Type

### The Approach

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Most servers walk up to a table blind. They greet. They smile. They ask about drinks. And they hope it goes well.

Top earners don't hope. They observe and diagnose.

Within 60 seconds, you should know:

- What type of table this is
- Who holds the power
- Who needs reassurance
- Who wants attention
- Who wants privacy
- How fast or slow should this experience move

If you miss this step, everything after feels awkward. If you master this step, 25% starts becoming normal.

### The 7 Core Table Types

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Almost every table falls into one of these categories. Your job is to identify it fast.

## 01 The First Date

This table is typically pretty easy to identify. You might see nervousness, quiet pauses, and slightly stiff body language. There are subtle attempts to impress each other. You will likely see one person talking while the other person scans the menu. One or both might feel pressure to make good choices. Awkward silences and quiet pauses are expected.

### What they need from you

Smooth guidance and confident support. A light & quick opener; provide structure. Help the decision maker look competent without making it obvious. Aim to reduce the anxiety at the table. Use humor if appropriate but remain very much outside their interactions; the night is not about you!

The Power Dynamic is usually based around the man trying to look confident. If the guy seems nervous or unsure about picking a wine, don't say "what bottle would you like?" Instead, try, "with the steak, obviously I'd go with a red. Would you prefer something bold or something lighter and smoother?" Now, he only has to pick between two good options. He feels competent. You've eliminated that awkward pause where he feels ill-equipped to make the "right" choice.

#### What not to do

Avoid asking many open-ended questions. Do not pressure any decisions. Allow as much time as needed. Avoid interrupting chemistry.

## 02 The Business Table

The energy is efficient. Hierarchical. Time-aware. There is always one person in charge. Find them. If you miss this, you lose control of the table. Determine if this is a working meal or if the team is celebrating a win.

How to spot the leader:

- Others look at them before answering.
- They sit at the head of the table.
- They speak first.
- When they enter, others stand up to shake their hand.

#### Your move

Before launching into anything, make brief eye contact with the leader. Even a subtle, "Would you like me to begin with the specials?" That signals respect. Then outline the flow to the group. Eliminate chaos. Do not interrupt conversations. After taking the order, your service should largely be completed silently.

## 03 The Family

The energy is unpredictable. May have multiple conversations going on. You may see kids fidgeting or exploring. Parents are always scanning for problems while also managing logistics (who needs to go to the bathroom, what is everyone going to have, who needs hand sanitizer, etc). Parents may be overwhelmed. They need speed, help, and zero judgment.

#### What the parents need from you

Solve problems before they happen. If the host hasn't done so, make sure children have booster seats and/or high chairs.

- Provide crayons immediately.
- Quick drinks (with lids)

- Extra napkins ready
- Kid food prioritized (or if appropriate, provide a small bowl of grapes or some crackers while waiting)

When parents feel supported, they relax. Parents are not evaluating you on personality. They are evaluating control and efficiency.

## 04 The Celebration

The energy at this table is highly social and celebratory. They may be loud and have multiple conversations going on. You may have to repeat the specials more than once.

### What they need

Controlled enthusiasm. Don't hijack the party, amplify it. A well-timed joke here works beautifully. But read it first. If they're deep in storytelling, you stay invisible. If there's a lull, that's your moment. Timing is everything.

Make sure to take the opportunity to celebrate the person of the hour. They should get their drink first, order first, and get their food first whenever possible. An added extra will always be appreciated, perhaps the chef sent out a special sauce on the side, or the bartender sent out a special drink for her to try (obviously, you asked the chef or bartender to do this, but it's even more celebratory to think the whole establishment is part of the congratulations).

## 05 The Regulars

The couple that comes in every Thursday night and sits at the same table. They know how things work; they have probably been coming longer than you have worked there. They may request a specific server or they may enjoy getting whoever's turn it is. They get to know all the staff's names and will ask how you are feeling if you were sick last week.

### Your move

They appreciate being remembered. They are not looking for special service, but after you have served them a couple of times, they appreciate you knowing how they take their coffee without asking. They may order the same thing every week, but tell them about the daily special anyway. Sometimes people will mix it up. Be welcoming and anticipate their needs but don't assume you know what they want without verifying first.

### What to avoid

Make sure to compliment her new hairstyle, but don't expect her to instantly notice you have a new server's book. Some might find it difficult to remember that the regulars are not there for you. Even if you become "their favorite" and they request your service, ultimately, they are there because of the establishment, not you. Do not ever speak badly about your manager, the owner, your coworker, or the changed time off policy. They are still guests and although they may become aware of practices, they are not a sounding board and they are not HR. You should be friendly, but not overly familiar. They may, in time, get to know more about you or ask about your family, but do not use them as your personal therapist.

## 06 High Control

This table got sat in your section out of turn after the host tried to seat them elsewhere and they requested a table, not a booth, and the one over there, not over here. They immediately commented that they hoped they would get drinks soon, unlike last time when they had to wait for 10 minutes before a server came over. They don't outright complain, but they preemptively comment on what they don't want to happen. This is the table that some servers dread.

But you should see this as an opportunity to use your behavior analytic skills. Once you recognize that this guest is not just being picky, but instead is showing you they are anxious about not having their needs met, your approach becomes supportive and reassuring, not annoyed and frustrated.

This table has a guest who repeats specific instructions numerous times. They want light ice, 2 lemon slices, dressing on the side, and their steak medium, but not too medium. They order a salad with ranch on the side, not on the salad, on the side. When the next guest orders their salad, they may interject to ask if they also want their dressing on the side.

### Your pro move

Do not become frustrated or annoyed. Remember that this guest is not questioning your competence, but they are guarding against being disappointed or misunderstood. Your approach is to remain in control and demonstrate competence.

Any opportunity to meet a need before they ask should be taken swiftly. If you notice they dropped their napkin, don't wait until they ask for another. Provide a fresh napkin before it hits the ground.

This table is a great opportunity to use what I call the fake mistake trick. More on this approach later...

## 07 The Social Table

This table has high energy. They are chatty and highly interactive. The power dynamic is fluid, there may not be one person clearly in charge. Be prepared for spit tickets. They need you to engage but not interrupt. You can joke around here but don't overdo it. You are seasoning the interaction but not becoming a main character.

### Your move

When this group of middle-aged women orders drinks, say you don't serve anyone under 21 so they will need to show you some ID. A flattering joke always plays well with this group. Take control of the pace and maintain order. Outline the process early and remove chaos. Be prepared for them to need more time to decide on entrees and for someone to want to be skipped until she hears what everyone else is getting. Keep the service moving in an orderly fashion. Reduced chaos improves the experience for everyone.

### Practice Assignment

*Tonight, don't try to change everything. Just do this...*

Before you greet each new table, pause for 3 seconds. Ask yourself:

- What type of table is this?
- Who is anxious or feels nervous?
- What energy does the table need?

Then approach intentionally. That's all. We will build from here.

# E

## Establish Structure

### HOW TO IDENTIFY THE DECISION-MAKER FAST

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This matters more than people realize.

Someone always:

- Is paying
- Cares about how they're perceived
- Feels responsible for the experience

Your job is not to flatter them. It's to reduce their stress.

If you remove decision friction, you increase tip percentage.

Watch for:

- Who sets the pace ("We are ready to order now.")
- Who asks others what they are thinking about ordering
- Who orders last
- Who asks clarifying questions
- Who makes eye contact when you speak

That's your anchor. Speak slightly more to them. Confirm decisions through them.

Subtle control.

### Stop Guessing Based on Appearance

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This is important. Do not decide tip potential by:

- Clothes
- Car keys
- Age
- Attractiveness
- Ethnicity
- Assumptions

That's amateur thinking. Some of the wealthiest guests look casual. Some of the loudest tables tip average. Your control is emotional — not visual.

## **Here's the Edgy Truth**

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If you walk up to every table with the same energy... You will average 18–20%.  
Because you are reacting.

When you walk up and diagnose first... You start leading.

And leaders earn more. Not because they hustle harder. Because they reduce uncertainty. And people reward certainty.

## **Act with Authority; Don't be Pushy**

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This is where average servers separate from top earners.

Most servers think authority means:

- Being loud
- Being dominant
- Being bossy
- “Upselling hard”

That's amateur thinking. Real authority is calm. Real authority removes uncertainty.

And when you remove uncertainty... People relax. And relaxed people tip higher.

## **Why Authority Increases Tip Percentage**

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When guests sit down, there is low-level tension:

- What should I order?
- Is this place good?
- How expensive is this going to be?
- Am I choosing correctly?
- Am I embarrassing myself?

Your job is to lower that tension. Not by being overly friendly. By being clear. Clear is calming. Calm people tip 25%.

## **The Flow Framework**

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You should almost always outline what's about to happen. Not aggressively. Just cleanly.



**EXAMPLE:** You are sat an 8-top, all adults, all dressed in business attire. You don't see any apparent "couples." There are several conversations going on.

"I'd like to tell you about some of our specials, then while I take everyone's drink orders, you all can decide which of our amazing appetizers you'd like to share. The apps are listed on the upper-right section of the menu. I'll start at this end and work my way around."

That sentence does 3 things:

1. Removes awkward silence.
2. Creates structure.
3. Positions you as competent.

Now they're not wondering what happens next. You're leading.

### **Soft Control vs. Pushy Control**

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Pushy sounds like this: "What appetizer are we starting with?"

Soft control sounds like this: "Are we leaning toward something light to start, or something to share?"

You narrowed their decision without forcing it. You reduced friction.

### **Helping the Decision-Maker Shine**

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Remember the first-date guy? He's nervous. He doesn't want to look cheap. He doesn't want to look clueless.

If you say, "What wine would you like?" You just exposed him.

Instead, say, "If you're doing steak tonight, I'd point you toward this cab — it's bold, smooth, and pairs beautifully." You gave him a confident choice. Now he feels decisive. He feels confident in making a solid decision in front of his date. When you make others feel confident, they will reward you.

### **Business Table Authority**

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This is where many servers collapse. They treat business tables like chaos. People are talking over each other. Seat numbers lose all importance.

Instead:

- Identify the leader.
- Confirm timing.
- Set pacing.

Example:

“Would you like me to move this along quickly tonight, or give you more space between courses?” Show awareness. That’s premium service. Premium service earns premium tips.

### **The Subtle Language Shift That Changes Everything**

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Replace:

“What do you want?”

“Are you ready?”

“What sides?”

With:

“What sounds good tonight?”

“Whenever you’re ready, I’m set.”

“Would you like roasted vegetables tonight?”

You’re narrowing down decisions. Less cognitive load = better emotional state.  
Better emotional state = higher tip.

### **Edgy Truth**

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If you’re standing there waiting for them to lead... You’re already losing control.  
And control affects comfort. And comfort affects the percentage.  
You don’t need to dominate. You need to guide.  
There’s a difference.

Establish Authority Fast

- ✓ Did I outline what happens next?
- ✓ Did I narrow decisions instead of expanding them?
- ✓ Did I identify who needed reassurance?
- ✓ Did I reduce uncertainty?
- ✓ Did I stay calm instead of being overly energetic?

#### **Practice Assignment**

*Tonight, don’t try to change everything. Just do this...*

Pick one table; just one.

- Outline the flow clearly.
- Then narrow every major decision into two options.

Watch how smooth the interaction feels.

Track that tip percentage.

# A

## Adjust the Energy

### **Humor as a release valve**

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Most servers think humor means:

- Being loud
- Telling jokes
- Performing

That's not what earns 25%.

Humor, when used correctly, is a release valve. It can regulate pressure. It releases tension. And tension is everywhere at the table.

People are:

- ❖ Worried about ordering correctly
- ❖ Worried about money
- ❖ Worried about looking stupid
- ❖ Worried about impressing someone
- ❖ Worried about being heard

Your job isn't to entertain. Your job is to regulate. And when you regulate emotion, tips go up.

### **The Ranch Principle (AKA the fake mistake)**

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Let's talk about the "ranch" example.

You've had this guest.

They say: "I'll have a house salad with ranch."

"And make sure it's ranch."

"And can I get extra ranch?"

"And I don't want the house dressing."

"And I'll need more tea because ranch makes me thirsty."

That's not about the ranch. That's anxiety. They don't trust that they'll be heard.

Now here's where average servers get annoyed.

They roll their eyes. They say, "Yes, I got it." They mentally label the guest as difficult.

But you do something different.

When repeating the order back, you say, “And you’ll start with the house salad with a bucket of ranch.”

Or:

“House salad... and I’ll see if we can track down some ranch for you.”

Or, my personal favorite, the ‘fake mistake’ bit:

“House salad for the lady. And you wanted our amazing blue cheese dressing?”

And then you lock eyes and smile. For half a second, they panic. Did you really mess up their instructions already? Then they realize you’re joking. And the whole table exhales.

That micro-moment does three things:

1. Shows you were listening.
2. Shows you’re confident.
3. Releases the tension they created.

That’s emotional control. That’s advanced service.

### **The “Light Ice” Play**

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Here’s another version of the fake mistake bit. Guest says: “Diet Coke. Light ice.” Then repeats it. Then they repeat it, explaining that too much ice waters down their soda.

You recap the tables’ drinks: “Two iced teas, a water with lemon, and for the lady — a Diet Coke with lots of extra ice.”

You pause. You catch her eye. There’s a flash of alarm. Then you smile. Perhaps a small (socially appropriate) wink. Now the table laughs.

Why does this work? Because you demonstrated:

1. You heard her.
2. You’re competent.
3. You’re not rattled.
4. You’re in control.

If you were unsure of yourself, this would backfire. But confidence makes it charming. And charm increases tips.

## Timing Is Everything

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Here's the rule:

Never joke when:

- Someone is upset
- The table is deeply serious
- You're behind or flustered
- You aren't 110% confident in the order

Humor requires stability. If your service basics aren't tight, humor feels risky. If your basics are perfect, humor feels effortless.

## The Micro-Tension Rule

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Look for moments where tension spikes:

- Someone can't decide
- Someone over-explains
- Someone apologizes too much
- There's an awkward silence
- The table energy dips

That's your opening. Not to perform. But to gently reset the emotional temperature. Sometimes it's a line. Sometimes it's tone. Sometimes it's just raised eyebrows and a smirk.

Understated works best. Dry works beautifully. Overdoing it kills it.

## The Invisible Skill

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Most servers think high tips come from:

- ★ Big personalities
- ★ Big laughs
- ★ Big energy

But often, the highest earners are calm. Measured. Slightly understated. Because confidence is attractive. And confidence makes guests feel safe. Safe people tip higher.

## The Hard Truth

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If you're walking up to tables hoping they like you... You're already behind. If you walk up assuming they will like you... You behave differently. Humor lands differently. Authority lands differently. Everything lands differently. And confidence changes income.

## Practice Assignment

*Tonight, don't try to change everything. Just do this...*

Pick one moment where someone over-explains something small.

- Use a light, controlled exaggeration when repeating it back.
- Smile immediately.

Watch the shift.

Then track the percentage.

# D

## Deliver Before Asked

Most servers think high tips come from personality. They don't. They come from flow. When service feels smooth, effortless, and invisible... People relax. When people relax... They tip higher. And smooth service doesn't happen by accident. It happens because you're moving.

### The Constant Motion Rule

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I never "worked a table." I worked a section. That's different. I didn't greet a table, walk away, hide in the server station, and wait to be flagged down.

I moved. Constantly. Circling. Scanning. Advancing each table to the next step. Not necessarily stopping at every table. But putting eyes on every table. Every pass through the section had a purpose.

### The 3-Question Scan

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Every time you move through your section, ask:

1. Are drinks low?
2. Is there anything I can pre-bus?
3. What is the next step of service here?

If drinks are low, don't ask: "Would you like more?" Say, "I'm going to bring more water — what else can I grab for you?" That language assumes service. Assumption signals competence. Competence increases tip percentage.

### Follow the Steps of Service — Then Improve Them

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Every restaurant has defined steps of service. That's the minimum. Minimum gets you 15%.

Use the steps as a backbone, a framework for the basics. Then layer anticipated needs on top.

Example:

New table sits. You grab menus, introduce yourself, and take drink orders. Before heading to the bar, you scan the section.

- Refill water at table 12.
- Pre-bus plates at table 8.
- Let table 6 know food is coming up.
- Ask if anyone needs anything before you step away.

Now when you go to the bar, you're not just placing drinks. You're carrying refills, extra condiments, whatever else was requested. Then you put eyes on the kitchen, warn them about the 8-top that you just got seated, tell the busser that table 10 is about to leave.

That's leadership. Not chaos. Not scrambling. Leadership. Guests feel that stability. Even if they can't articulate it.

### **The Invisible Advantage**

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When a guest never has to ask for:

- ★ Ketchup
- ★ Extra napkins
- ★ More water
- ★ A new fork
- ★ The check

They feel taken care of.

When they have to ask? Micro-frustration. Micro-frustrations reduce tip percentage. One missed refill won't kill your tip. But repeated friction adds up. 25% isn't about doing something huge. It's about removing small annoyances before they happen.

### **Pacing Is Power**

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The server controls time. Not the kitchen. Not the guests. You. If the entrees are coming up but the dirty appetizer plates are still on the table? You're behind.

If guests are stacking plates? You're behind. If they're looking around for you? You're behind.

But if you pre-bus naturally... If you monitor for when they're slowing down... If you print the check before they need to ask... You feel professional. And professionals earn more.

### **The Hard Truth**

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If you're overwhelmed every shift... It's not because you're unlucky. It's because you're reacting instead of circulating. Motion creates control. Control creates calm. Calm creates higher percentages.

### **The Discipline Most Servers Avoid**

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Tracking. I tracked every shift. Sales. Tips. Percentage. Not obsessively. But intentionally. Because what gets measured improves.

If you don't know your percentage, you're guessing. If you're guessing, you're not improving. Professionals know their numbers. Behavior Analysis relies on data.

During every section loop:

- ✓ Scan drink levels
- ✓ Pre-bus something
- ✓ Identify next step
- ✓ Communicate with kitchen
- ✓ Signal bussers
- ✓ Advance each table

And never stand still unless you're completing a step.

### Practice Assignment

*Tonight, don't try to change everything. Just do this...*

For the full shift:

- Do not walk through your section without completing or advancing something.
- No empty passes.
- Move every table forward every time you circle.

Then track your percentage.



# CHAPTER 3

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MINDSET

## **The Testing Mindset — You Have More Control Than You Think**

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Here's the excuse I hear constantly:

"That table was cheap."

"They never tip."

"That group is a waste of time."

"That shift was dead."

Sometimes that's true. But most of the time?

It's lazy thinking. Let me tell you about the table no one wanted.

## **The "Waste of Time" Table**

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Every Friday. Fine dining. A group of 12–15 older men. They stayed 90 minutes.

No alcohol. No desserts.

Separate checks. All 12-15 individual checks.

About half were soup and water guys. \$10 checks.

Other servers avoided them. Because "you can't make money."

In fine dining, a single lunch table should be \$50+ in tips.

This group? Supposedly impossible.

I took them every chance I got. Because I didn't see a waste. I saw predictability.

Predictability is control. Control is money.

## **Here's What Most Servers Did**

They complained. They waited for them to finish eating before splitting checks. They acted slightly annoyed. They treated the table like a burden. And then they were shocked when they made \$20.

## **Here's What I Did Instead**

I prepared. Before they walked in:

- Coffee already going.
- Extra lemons ready.
- Water without ice for Dr. B.
- I already knew the soup of the day.
- I already knew Mr. C's favorite dish was 86'd and had suggested options in mind.

When they sat down, there was no chaos. It was smooth. Orders? Identical every week. No friction.

The biggest mistake other servers made?

They waited. They waited to split checks. They waited for someone to ask. They waited to react. I didn't wait. As soon as food hit the table, I split 12 checks. Why?

Because I knew they weren't getting dessert. They knew they weren't getting deserts.

Why create frustration later? When they were ready to leave, bills were done. No pressure. No scrambling. No irritation. And irritation affects tips.

### **The 23-Person Surprise**

One Friday, the group doubled; 23 men arrived. The table was set for 15.

Because I had systems in place, I didn't panic. Yes, I had to ask a coworker to help me bring in chairs and get additional place settings. Yes, refills took longer. Yes, movement had to be tighter.

But I communicated. I stayed ahead. I moved.

That day? I made over \$140 from one lunch table. The "worthless" table.

### **The Lesson**

The table wasn't the problem. The system was.

Most servers:

- React.
- Complain.
- Wait.
- Blame.

Professionals:

- Prepare.
- Anticipate.
- Move.
- Control friction.

If you treat a table like a burden... They feel it. If you treat them like a predictable opportunity...They feel that too. And people reward how you make them feel.

### **The Real Edge**

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You will occasionally:

- Do everything right.
- Control emotion.
- Lead smoothly.
- Anticipate perfectly.

And still get 15%.

It happens. That's not failure. That's variance.

But if you're sitting at 18% long-term?

That's not variance. That's a ceiling you haven't broken. And ceilings break with skill. Not luck.

## **Start Acting Like a Professional**

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Professionals track. Professionals test. Professionals review. If you're serious about 25%+, do this:

For the next 30 days:

- Track your sales.
- Track your tips.
- Calculate your percentage.
- Test one new strategy per shift. Not ten. One.

Maybe it's:

- Narrowing decisions.
- Outlining the flow.
- Splitting checks early.
- Pre-bussing aggressively.
- Controlled humor.

Then measure. Improvement without measurement is guessing. I have included a tracking form you can use, but use what works for you. Just so long as you keep data.

## **One Critical Caveat**

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It is extremely important to track data to know what works for you. However, this is not to say that you should focus a great deal of attention on your tips. In fact, I suggest you not count or look at your tips until the end of the night. If you want to improve your tips, the worst thing to do is become hyper-focused on the money. It will show through to your tables. It comes off as greedy, fake, and materialistic. It's just yuck, Focus on providing exceptional service. Focus on your guests. The tips will follow.

### **Practice Assignment**

*Tonight, don't try to change everything. Just do this...*

Take the table that other servers avoid.

Instead of seeing it as low potential...

See it as a system challenge.

- Prepare before they sit.
- Eliminate one frustration before it happens.

Then track the tip.



# CHAPTER 4

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PROFESSIONALISM

## **Case Study — From State Director to 25% Server**

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There was a time when I would have been embarrassed to tell you what I do. I had been a state director before I was thirty. I ran a consulting company in my early thirties. I worked in high-level administration in what was supposed to be my dream job. And then I lost it all.

When I first started serving, I saw it as temporary. A fallback. A step down. I thought, “This is a menial job.”

But something shifted. I realized something important:  
A menial job does not mean a menial person.

There is honor in serving others. Real honor. Because putting your ego aside and focusing on someone else’s needs takes discipline. It takes emotional strength. It takes awareness. It takes restraint. Most people don’t understand that. They think serving is about carrying plates. It’s not.

It’s about:

- Reading people.
- Regulating energy.
- Reducing stress.
- Creating ease.
- Guiding without dominating.

That’s skill. And skill deserves respect.

## **The Moment It Clicked**

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The day I realized I was making as much — sometimes more — than I had in my “prestigious” career... something inside me relaxed. I no longer felt ashamed. I felt free.

I don’t go home thinking about crisis calls. I don’t wake up in the middle of the night worrying about budgets. I don’t carry heavy trauma home with me. It’s just food. And that is enough.

I still treat it as a profession. Because it is. I track my numbers. I improve intentionally. I refine my system. But when I clock out? I clock out. That freedom is priceless.

## **Why This Matters to You**

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You might not have my story. But you may have some similarities:

Maybe you:

- Feel stuck.

- Feel undervalued.
- Feel like serving is temporary.
- Feel like you “should” be doing something else.

Here’s the truth: If you’re going to do this job... Do it professionally. Because professionals earn more. Professionals track. Professionals improve. Professionals control what they can control. And when you master The 60-Second Table Read System™, you’re no longer reacting to tables. You’re leading them. That shift changes everything.

### **What Changed in My Income**

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When I stopped seeing serving as “just a job” and started seeing it as “A system to master,” my percentages stabilized above 25%. My fine-dining nights hit \$300–400 consistently. My “worthless” tables became predictable wins. And my stress dropped to almost nothing. Not because the job changed. Because I changed how I approached it.

### **Serving Is Not About Ego**

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It’s about presence.

When you drop ego:

- You don’t take short tips personally.
- You don’t get rattled by specific requests.
- You don’t resent guests.

You focus on the craft. And craft creates consistency. Consistency creates income. Income creates freedom.

#### **Quick Reflection**

*Ask yourself*

- ✓ Do I treat this like a profession?
- ✓ Do I know my average percentage?
- ✓ Do I blame tables more than I analyze them?
- ✓ Do I react — or do I lead?

If you’re honest, you already know where your growth is.



# CHAPTER 5

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**SUMMARY**

## In Summary

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Let's quickly revisit the essential insights we've covered:



You have the ability to control your tips. You don't do this by focusing on tips. You focus instead on reading your guests' behavior in order to anticipate their unspoken needs.



Your goals should be to make guests feel less anxious, remove friction, boost confidence, and anticipate needs.



The 7 common table types each respond to different styles of service. The type of table is a starting point, not a hard rule!



You are a professional. Learn your craft. Be open to learning more skills every day. The more pride you take in your job, the more you will be rewarded.

## Reminder

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Don't forget that you should check your email for your bonuses!

1. Practice assignments
2. Tip tracking data sheet
3. Table Type cheat sheet
4. Presentation reminder video

If you have any questions, or if you don't see your bonuses in your inbox (or junk folder), feel free to reach out! I'll do my best to help!

- Meghan

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