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RESTAURANT SPACE PLANNING GUIDE



A practical approach to designing
functional and flexible dining spaces

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL SPACE PLAN

Space planning is a crucial part of designing a restaurant that not only looks great but delivers a seamless guest experience. Whether you're starting fresh or reworking an existing layout, thoughtful planning can make all the difference. This guide offers practical insights to help you navigate common challenges, avoid costly missteps, and design spaces that are as functional as they are inviting.

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO SUCCESS



Keep the flow balanced

A well-planned space supports the flow of both people and operations while balancing form and function. Comfort, adaptability, and clarity of use should be at the core of the design.

- ☐ Define your restaurant's concept and service style (fast casual, full service, etc.)
- ☐ Balance aesthetics with function
- ☐ Plan for a variety of seating needs (dine-in, takeout, groups)
- ☐ Prioritize accessibility, safety, and comfort
- ☐ Keep adaptability in mind for future needs



Offer something for everyone

Seating should accommodate a wide range of body types, physical abilities, and group sizes. Layouts benefit from built-in flexibility—tables that can be combined, varied seating styles, and spaces that welcome everyone, including those waiting or ordering to go.

Inclusive seating options

- ☐ Chairs with and without arms
- ☐ Accessible seating locations and table heights

Flexible layouts

- ☐ Tables that can combine or separate
- ☐ Open space that can be reconfigured for events or groups

Comfortable waiting and to-go zones

- ☐ Benches or lounge seating near entrance
- ☐ Clear signage and/or space for pickup or mobile orders



Common problems to avoid

Overcrowded pathways, rigid layouts, and inaccessible seating can quickly undermine the experience. Prevent bottlenecks and frustration by building in circulation space, layout adaptability, and clearly designated zones for waiting and pickup.

Here are some issues to be aware of:

- ☐ Overcrowding or lack of clear walking paths
- ☐ Ignoring ADA compliance or accessibility needs
- ☐ Rigid layouts that limit seating flexibility
- ☐ No designated waiting area or awkward to-go pickup setup
- ☐ Poor staff circulation, especially near the kitchen or POS stations



Things to consider

The flow of movement—both for guests and staff—should feel natural and uninterrupted. Clearly defined zones for dining, service, and waiting help establish rhythm and efficiency, while careful attention to sightlines, lighting, and acoustics enhances the overall experience.

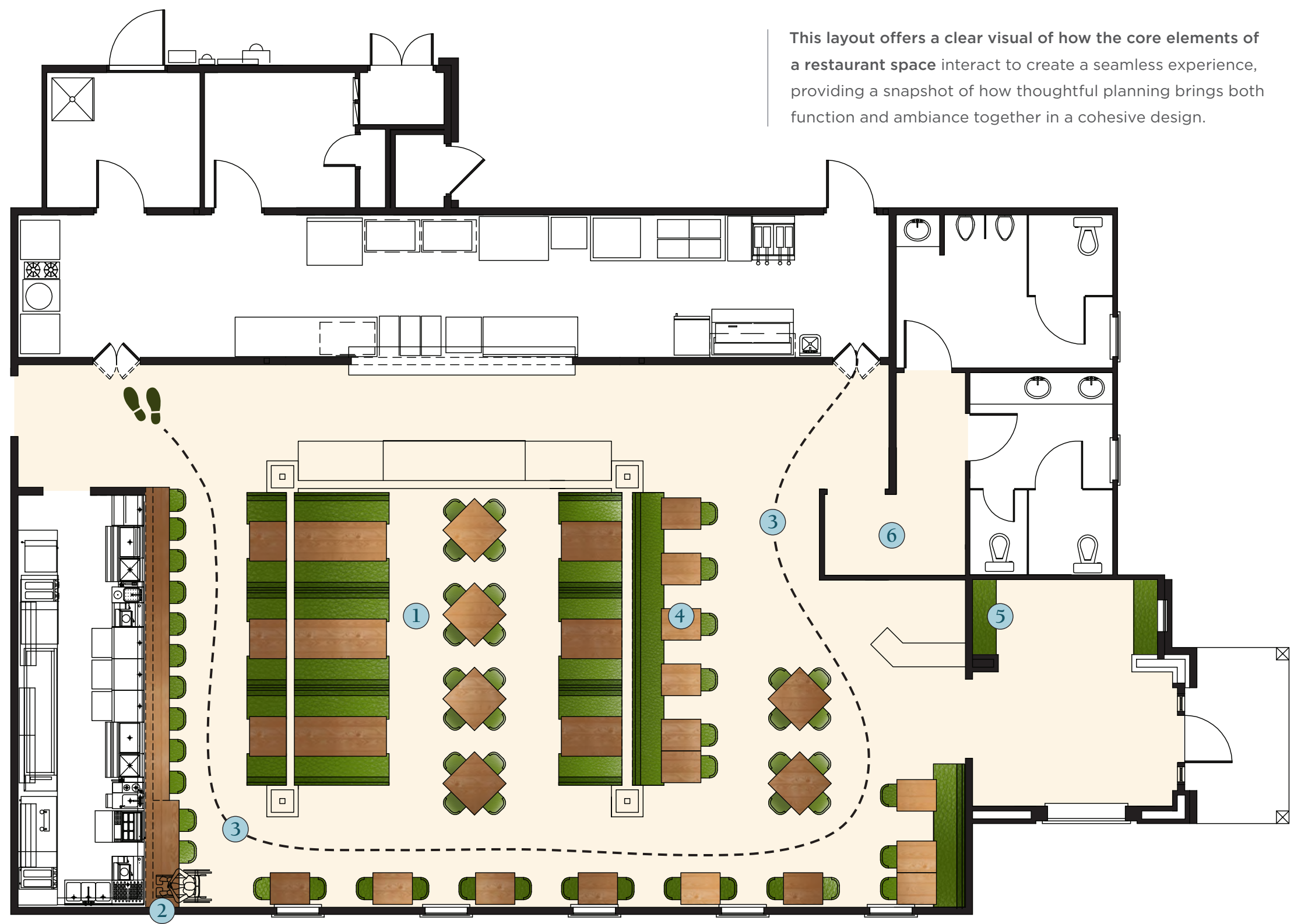
- ☐ **Traffic flow:** Ensure smooth movement for patrons and staff
- ☐ **Zoning:** Divide space into entry, dining, waiting, and service areas
- ☐ **Line of sight:** Consider lines of sight and avoid unattractive views of restrooms, kitchens and storage
- ☐ **Acoustics and ambiance:** Use partitions or soft materials for noise control
- ☐ **Lighting and natural flow:** Consider how light affects mood and visibility



FURNITURE LAYOUT CONSIDERATIONS

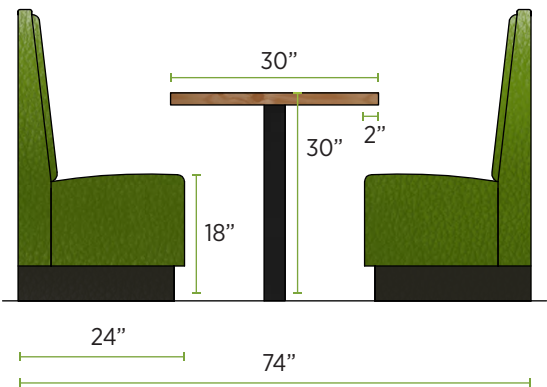
- 1 Offer an array of seating options including chairs at freestanding tables, bar seating and comfortable booth seating.
- 2 Offer seating options to accommodate wheelchairs, highchairs, etc.
- 3 Consider the flow of traffic through dining spaces for both staff and patrons.
- 4 Consider flexible layout options that can accommodate both small and large parties.
- 5 Optimize seating for waiting parties. Patrons are more likely to wait for a table when there is somewhere comfortable to wait.
- 6 Use strategically placed hallways and doorways to keep bathrooms and kitchens out of eyesight and earshot of patrons.

This layout offers a clear visual of how the core elements of a restaurant space interact to create a seamless experience, providing a snapshot of how thoughtful planning brings both function and ambiance together in a cohesive design.

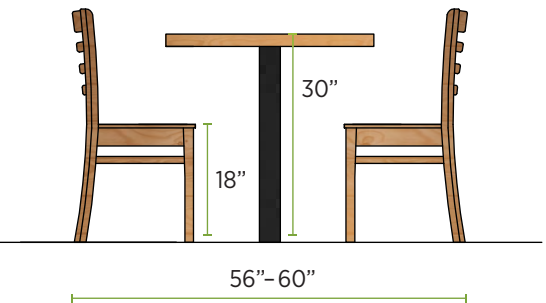


FURNITURE LAYOUT DIMENSIONS

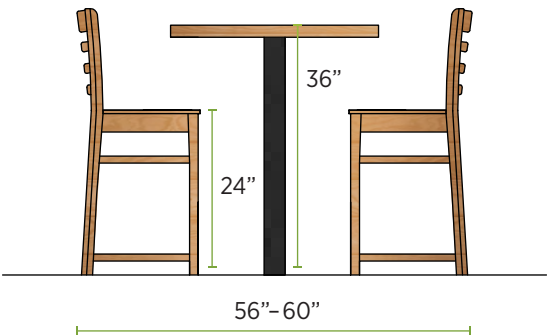
Typical booth spacing



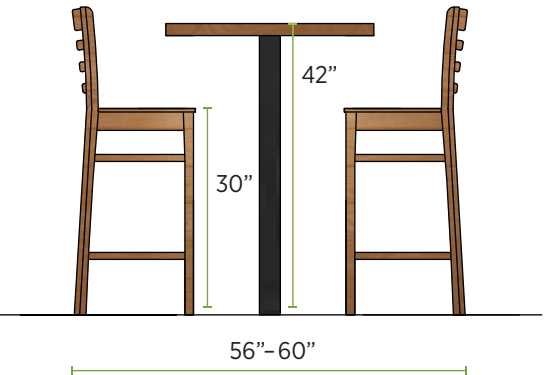
Dining height seating



Counter height seating



Bar height seating



RECOMMENDED SEATING GUIDELINES

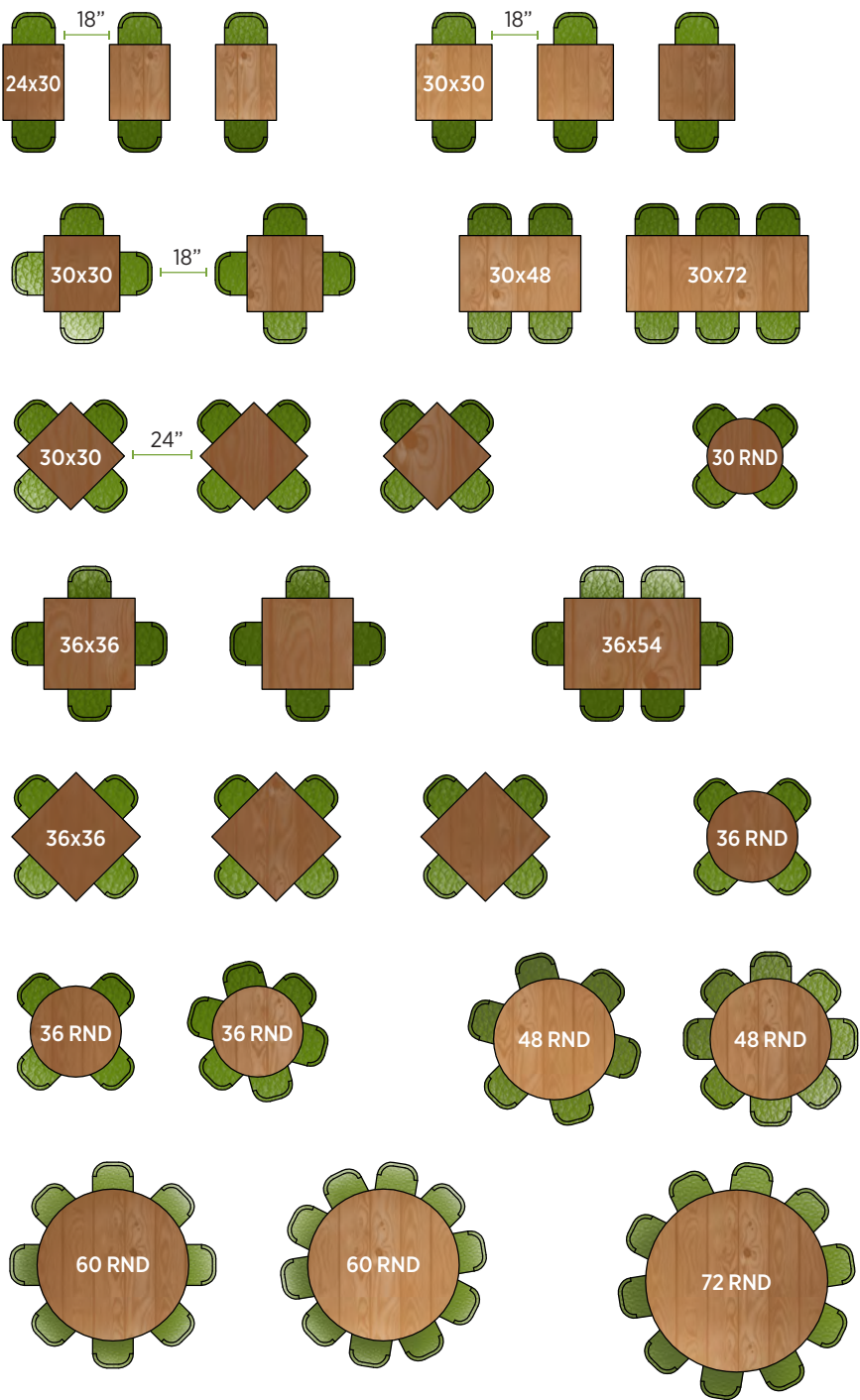


Table and seating dimensions should be tailored to the space and its intended use. Standard sizing helps ensure comfort and code compliance, while allowing for reconfiguration to suit varying party sizes and seating arrangements.

- Standard dimensions for 2, 4, 6, and 8-top tables
- Minimum spacing between tables for comfort and movement
- Dining, counter and bar dimensions
- Tips for mix-and-match table groupings

Spacing will vary depending on chair width. Diagram is only for recommendation. Please check the codes in your area for legal requirements.



SPACE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Use this checklist as a final sweep to ensure the space is functional, inclusive, and adaptable — ready to support a seamless dining experience for both guests and staff.

Keys to a successful space plan

- ☐ The restaurant's concept and service style is clearly defined.
- ☐ The layout balances aesthetics with practical function.
- ☐ The space allows for future adjustments or reconfigurations.
- ☐ Flow and comfort are prioritized equally.

Offer something for everyone

- ☐ Seating options are inclusive of all body types.
- ☐ Accessible seating is available and properly placed.
- ☐ There's flexibility to accommodate small and large parties.
- ☐ A comfortable area exists for takeout and guests waiting to be seated.

Design for flexibility and flow

- ☐ Pathways are wide enough for easy guest and staff movement.
- ☐ ADA requirements are met throughout the space.
- ☐ Furniture and layout can adapt for different needs.
- ☐ There's a clearly designated and welcoming waiting/pickup area.

What to consider when laying out your space

- ☐ Guest and staff traffic flows without obstruction.
- ☐ Zones for dining, waiting, ordering, and service are clearly defined.
- ☐ Sightlines do not include restrooms, kitchens or storage.
- ☐ Acoustics and lighting have been thoughtfully planned.

Table sizing guidelines

- ☐ Table dimensions are appropriate for party sizes.
- ☐ Adequate spacing exists between tables for comfort and accessibility.
- ☐ Bar, booth, and counter seating follow ergonomic and accessibility standards.
- ☐ Tables can be rearranged to serve different group sizes easily.



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