



BARISTA SCHOOL IRELAND • POCKET GUIDE

MANUAL HANDLING AWARENESS

*The key points from your awareness course, for cafés, restaurants and hotels.
Keep it on your phone or pin it up in the staff room.*

Awareness (theory) only. This guide and the course support, and do not replace, your employer's risk assessment and the practical training in your own tasks that is given at work by a competent instructor. If a task hurts, stop and tell your manager.

INSIDE: THE EIGHT LESSONS

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| 02 How injuries happen | 06 Café and hospitality loads |
| 03 Avoid, assess, reduce | 07 Posture and repetitive work at the bar |
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LESSON 1

WHY IT MATTERS AND THE LAW

✓ This course is

- The theory: the law in plain words, the risks, and what good practice looks like

✗ It is not

- Practical training. You can't learn to lift safely from a screen

Where your work involves risky handling, your employer will also assess those tasks and give you practical training in them, at work.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) says about **a third** of all workplace injuries reported to it are caused by manual handling. Most are to the back, neck, shoulders and arms. They can be slow to heal and can come back.

Manual handling means moving or supporting a load by hand or with your body: lifting and putting down, pushing and pulling, carrying, holding or supporting. The law covers handling that **involves a risk of injury**, particularly to the back. A cup at waist height is not a risk. A full keg is.

Your employer must

- 1 Avoid** risky handling where possible, by organising the work or using equipment.
- 2 Assess** the handling that can't be avoided.
- 3 Reduce** the risk of what is left.
- 4 Tell you** about the loads, such as their weight.
- 5 Train you** for the tasks you do, and take your own needs into account.

You must

- ☐ Take reasonable care of yourself and the people around you.
- ☐ Use the trolleys, steps and other equipment provided, the way you were shown.
- ☐ Attend the training your employer asks you to.
- ☐ Report anything that could hurt someone: a broken trolley, a dangerous stack, a task that causes pain.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Part 2, Chapter 4 and Schedule 3.

No magic number. Irish law sets no maximum weight for lifting at work. A light box can still hurt you if you lift it badly, often, or from the floor at arm's length. What matters is the whole task: the load, how you move it, where you are, and you.

LESSON 2

HOW INJURIES HAPPEN

Your spine is a stack of small bones with **discs** between them, working like shock absorbers. Muscles and ligaments hold it together and move it. Your back is strong when it is upright and the load is close; weakest when you bend, twist or reach.

All at once

one heavy, awkward or sudden lift strains a muscle or damages a disc

Little by little

many smaller strains, day after day, add up to wear and tear

Most handling injuries build up over time. That's why small habits matter.

Risky postures

- ✗ Bending forward from the waist

✗ Twisting while holding a load
- ✗ Reaching out, up or down for a load

✗ Lifting with the load held away from your body

Bending and twisting at the same time puts perhaps the greatest stress on your back.

The five risk factors (Schedule 3)

Factor	What makes it risky	In a café
The load	Too heavy, too big, hard to grip, unstable, or held away from your body	A crate of milk, a sack of flour, a full bin bag with broken glass in it
The effort	Too strenuous, needs a twist, sudden, or done off balance	–
The environment	Not enough space, a wet or uneven floor, steps, poor light, heat	A narrow stockroom, a wet floor behind the bar, stairs to the cellar
The activity	Too often, too long, too far, or at a pace you can't control	A delivery to put away in a rush before opening
The individual	Your health, clothing and footwear, and whether you have been trained	A new starter, someone pregnant, or someone with a sore back

Some people remember them as TILE: Task, Individual, Load, Environment.

LESSON 3

Avoid, Assess, Reduce

The law sets an order. Lifting technique comes last, not first.

1

Avoid

can the job be done without lifting by hand?

2

Assess

for what is left, what makes it risky?

3

Reduce

change the load, the task or the place to lower the risk

Training helps, but on its own it does not prevent injuries. Changing the job does.

Avoid: for example

- The supplier wheels the delivery into the stockroom instead of leaving it at the door.
- A keg trolley or sack truck does the lifting.
- Store heavy stock where it is used.
- Empty a large pot or urn before moving it.

Reduce: for example

- Order smaller bags: two 12.5 kg bags of flour instead of one 25 kg bag.
- Heavy stock at waist height; light things up high or low.
- Clear the route: no boxes in walkways, floors dry.
- Share the job, or use a trolley for the long part.
- Spread heavy jobs through the day, and swap tasks.

Your employer’s risk assessment looks at each handling task: how it is done, the weights and distances, the risk factors, what can be improved, and whether it worked. They should ask the people who do the job: be honest about what is hard. The findings should be shared with you, and your practical training built on them.

Your quick check before you lift

Stop for a few seconds and think:

Ask yourself	
The load	How heavy? Is it stable? Can I grip it? Test it by tilting one corner.
The route	Is it clear and dry? Any doors, steps or ramps?
The destination	Is there space? What height does it go to?
Help	Do I need a trolley, a step, or a second person?

If in doubt, don’t lift. Ask.

LESSON 4

A SAFER LIFT: THE PRINCIPLES

Your practical trainer at work will show you how these apply to your own tasks, and watch you practise.

- 1 **Think before you lift.** Plan where it is going, the route, and whether you need help or a trolley. Remove anything in the way first.
- 2 **Get set.** Stand close to the load, feet apart, one foot slightly forward, for a stable base. Bend your back, hips and knees a little at the start: don't stoop right over, and don't squat fully.
- 3 **Get a good hold.** Secure. Hugging the load close is better than gripping it hard with your hands.
- 4 **Lift and move. Keep the load close** to your waist, heaviest side next to you. Don't bend your back further as you lift. **Head up** once you have hold: look ahead, not down. Move smoothly: no jerking or snatching.
- 5 **Turn with your feet.** Don't twist or lean sideways.
- 6 **Put down, then adjust.** Lowering is a lift in reverse, with the same risk. Put the load down first, then slide it into position. Watch your fingers and toes; don't drop the last few centimetres.

Team lifts

- Only when an aid isn't possible or practical.
- Agree who leads, the route and where it goes, before you lift.
- Lift and lower together on a count: "ready, steady, lift".
- Similar height and strength makes it easier.
- Keep talking all the way.

Know your limits

Don't lift more than you can easily manage. If a load is heavier, bigger or more awkward than you expected, **put it down** and get help or a trolley.

Asking for help is part of doing the job well.

LESSON 5

PUSHING, PULLING, CARRYING AND TROLLEYS

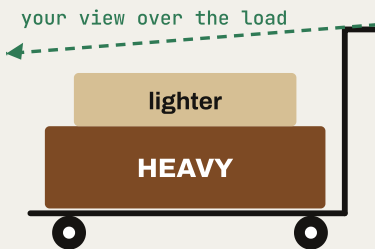
Push rather than pull

- You can see where you are going and use your body weight.
- Back upright, hands at about waist height, lean in a little.
- Small steps. Starting is the hardest part: get it moving steadily.

Carrying

- Smaller loads and more trips beat one heavy, high stack.
- Both hands, load close.
- Stairs: one hand free for the rail, and see your feet.
- Long distances: trolley for the long part.

Loading a trolley



The right trolley, in good order

- ☐ **The right aid:** a keg trolley for kegs, a sack truck for boxes, a cage or flat trolley for crates
- ☐ **Wheels** turn freely and the **brakes** work
- ☐ A wheel that sticks, or a trolley that pulls to one side? **Report it** and use another
- ☐ **Never stand on a trolley**

Heavy items at the bottom, lighter ones on top.

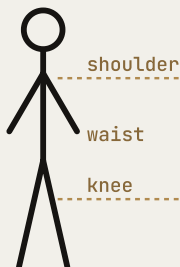
Stop before the load blocks your view. Make sure it can't slide off.

Ramps, doors and slopes: slopes, kerbs, door saddles and lifts make a trolley harder to control. Go slowly and keep control; get help if the load is heavy or the slope is steep. Never let a trolley run, and never try to stop a runaway load with your body.

LESSON 6

CAFÉ AND HOSPITALITY LOADS

Storage: where heavy things go

**Above shoulder***lighter things only***Knee to shoulder***heavy stock, as close to waist height as possible***Below knee***lighter things only*

Use a proper step or step ladder: never a chair, a crate or the counter. Keep stockroom floors clear and dry.

Deliveries

Ask suppliers to leave them where they will be stored. Break stacks of crates or boxes down: fewer at a time, close to your body, or a trolley. Don't rush the put-away before opening: plan it. Tell your manager about anything unusually heavy.

Kegs and gas cylinders

A full beer keg can weigh about 80 kg: the HSA's hospitality guide says use a keg trolley at all times. Never lift or stack kegs or cylinders by hand on your own. Only change them if trained to, with the aids provided.

Bins and waste

Don't overfill bags: more, lighter bags are safer. Carry them away from your legs: glass and sharp edges cut through. Brake on before you load the wheelie bin. A clear, dry route: push, don't drag.

Tables, chairs and events

Clear tables before moving them. Big tables are a two-person job: agree the route first. Don't stack chairs higher than you can lift from and to safely. Use the trolleys or dollies provided.

Hot, heavy and awkward

Don't carry large pots, urns or bains-marie full of hot liquid. Empty or ladle out first.

Coins and trays

Coin bags are small but heavy: carry them close, split them up, not through a busy room. Trays and plates: what you can manage comfortably, balanced and close to you.

LESSON 7

POSTURE AND REPETITIVE WORK AT THE BAR

Tamping, knocking out, steaming, pouring, wiping, the till and carrying plates are light jobs. Done hundreds of times a shift, they can strain your wrists, arms, shoulders and neck.

✓ Tamping and knocking out

- Wrist straight, elbow above the tamper: press down through your arm
- Tamp firmly once
- Knock out with your arm, into a knock box at a comfortable height
- Swap hands or tasks during long rushes, where you can

✗ Avoid

- Bend your wrist to tamp
- Press harder: it doesn't help the coffee or your wrist
- Knock out with a flick of the wrist
- Stretch over the machine or bend under the counter all shift

Set up your station

- Things you use most (cups, jugs, milk, lids) within easy reach, between waist and shoulder height.
- Counter, shelves or machine make you lean or stretch? Tell your manager.

Plates and trays

- Only as many plates as you can manage comfortably.
- Heaviest items in the centre of the tray, close to your body.
- Look ahead: busy floors, steps and spills.

Standing all day

- ☐ Supportive, non-slip shoes
- ☐ Change position often: shift your weight, move around, don't lock your knees
- ☐ Use your breaks. Sit down if you can
- ☐ Anti-fatigue mats help where you stand longest

Repetitive work is a risk factor too: "too often, too long".

Your station check, every shift

- ☐ Cups, jugs, milk and lids within easy reach, between waist and shoulder height
- ☐ Knock box at a comfortable height
- ☐ Supportive, non-slip shoes on
- ☐ A colleague to swap hands or tasks with in long rushes
- ☐ Breaks planned, and taken
- ☐ Anything that makes you lean or stretch: told your manager

LESSON 8

REPORTING PAIN AND LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Early signs

- ☐ Aching or stiffness that lasts after your shift
- ☐ Tingling, numbness or weakness in your hands, wrists or arms
- ☐ Pain when you do a particular task
- ☐ Sleep disturbed by aches

Early signs are a warning. They are easier to fix now than later.

Report it early

A task hurts, a twinge, or a near miss



Tell your manager straight away



It is recorded



The task is looked at

Reporting is part of your duty under the 2005 Act. It also protects the next person who does that job.

If things change for you: tell your manager if you are pregnant, coming back after an injury or illness, or find a task harder than before. Your employer must take your own needs into account and may adjust your tasks.

Looking after yourself

- ☐ Closed, non-slip shoes with good grip, and clothing that lets you move freely.
- ☐ Keep generally active, and rest between busy shifts.
- ☐ Want exercises for your back? Ask a doctor or physiotherapist first.
- ☐ See a doctor if pain lasts, gets worse, or spreads down your leg or arm.

What happens next

At work

Your employer assesses the handling tasks and gives you practical training in the ones you do, with a competent instructor.

Refresh

We suggest repeating this course every 3 years, or sooner if your work, equipment or loads change.

Think, plan, and ask for help. Every lift.

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Awareness (theory) only. Your employer's procedures and your manager's instructions always come first.

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