



Mega Tips

***Scientifically Tested Techniques
to Increase Your Tips***

by

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The suggested tip is \$5, but even \$1 will be appreciated. Send tips to:

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Mega Tips

Scientifically Tested Techniques to Increase Your Tips

If you are among the nearly two million people who work as waiters or waitresses in the United States, you depend on voluntary gifts of money (or tips) from your customers for the vast majority of your income, but have probably never received instruction in ways to increase the tips your customers leave. This booklet is written for you. It provides instruction in the psychology of tipping as well as specific techniques that can be used to earn larger tips.

A few other people have written books on how to earn larger tips. For example, Patti Farnham sells a book titled *Gratuity Ingenuity: The Secret Art of Bigger Tips*, which can be found at <http://www.gratuityingenuity.com/>, for \$20.00. I have read Patti's book and it is very good – servers will find it a fun read with lots of worthwhile ideas about how to earn larger tips. However, Patti's book is based on her personal experiences. In essence, she tells readers -- *I made really great tips as a waitress and here is what I did*. The problem with this approach is that readers have no way of knowing which of the specific strategies and tactics she describes were actually responsible for her success. In addition, Patti comes across in her book as a charismatic individual with a fun personality, which makes you wonder how much of the success of her techniques depends on her personality and how well the techniques would work for less extraverted servers.

Patti describes her approach to bigger tips as an “art.” While I believe that there is merit to her approach, I also believe that servers would benefit from a more systematic and scientific approach to earning larger tips. That scientific approach is what I will present in this booklet. Social scientists in such diverse fields as communications, hospitality management, psychology and sociology have conducted experiments and quasi-experiments on ways to increase tips. Those scientifically tested techniques that proved to be effective are described below along with the theorized explanations for their effectiveness and the evidence supporting that effectiveness.

The techniques described below were mostly tested in low to mid-priced, causal dining restaurants. Thus, these techniques should work in such informal operations as Applebee’s, Bennigan’s, Bob Evans, Bucca di Beppo, Chi-Chi’s, Chili’s Grill & Bar, Cracker Barrel, Denny’s, Friendly’s, Hard Rock Cafe, International House of Pancakes, Joe’s Crab Shack, Lone Star Steakhouse & Saloon, Max & Erma’s, Olive Garden, On the Border, Outback Steakhouse, Pizza Hut, Pizzeria Uno, Red Lobster, Ruby Tuesdays, Shoney’s, and TGI Friday’s. On the other hand, these techniques may not work in more formal, upscale restaurants such as Chart House, Morton’s of Chicago, or Ruth Chris Steak House. In fact, most of the techniques would be inappropriate in the more formal atmosphere of fine dining restaurants.

All of the techniques in this booklet are simple, easy to copy behaviors. You do not have to change your personality or engage in some elaborate and difficult routine to make these techniques work. So read on! You will be surprised how easy the road to bigger tips really is.

NOTE TO SKEPTICS



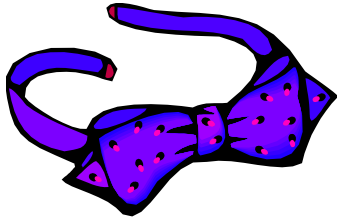
Even though the techniques presented in this booklet have been scientifically tested and the evidence supporting their effectiveness is described along with the technique, some readers will have doubts. The simplicity of the techniques can be misleading. It just doesn't make sense to some people that simple little behaviors can have such a big effect on the amount of money that other people give away. For those readers un-persuaded by the scientific evidence, I provide the following testimonial sent to me by Joshua Ogle – a restaurant worker who found one of my earlier articles on ways to increase tips and shared that article with his co-workers.

“Here's how it all happened: I was browsing around the Cornell website, Hotel School section, and came across your article. I read it, acknowledged it as a nice piece, and continued reading through the site. When I went to work (I work at a restaurant, by the way, called Texas Roadhouse), I started to notice, after reading your paper, that people kept on and kept on complaining about not making lots of tips. I remembered some of the tips that you had in the paper, and I looked around to see if I saw people doing what you said worked: writing messages on the back of checks, using check-holders with credit card symbols on them, etc. I told a few people about the ideas, and two said that they would try some stuff out, because they were tired of making no tips. The other couple said that they were fine how they were and that the information in the article was "bull crap.”

So, Bailey and John (their names, naturally) proceeded to follow your teachings, and at the end of the night, both came out between 8 and 10 percent higher in tips. I'd say that's very impressive, and they thought the same, but the others who did not believe me said it must just be a coincidence. Bailey and John, again the following night, brought in more tips than they had been before. Then the others started talking to each other, and giving hints to each other, and telling about how I'd told them about it, etc. So, I went to the site, printed it off, and hung it up on our nightly news board, for everyone to see. Of course, I gave complete credit to you (I printed it with full "Cornell" symbols at the top, as well as your name on it and whatnot), and people have thanked me about once a week since then, about three months ago. Overall, everyone was happy and definitely saw an increase, thanks to you."

Skepticism is good – it keeps you from falling prey to empty promises. However, too much skepticism can also make you miss out on worthwhile opportunities. That almost happened to some of Joshua's co-workers. Those skeptics who decided without evidence that my article was "bull crap" and refused to try the techniques would have continued making lousy tips if some of their less skeptical co-workers had not been willing to give the techniques a try and then shared their experiences. Don't let the fate that almost befell those skeptics happen to you. Keep your skepticism intact, but read about these techniques with an open mind and, above all, give them a try! The techniques are easy to implement, you got this booklet free of charge, and I ask you to send me a monetary tip only if you find that the techniques increase your tips, so what have you got to lose?

WEAR SOMETHING UNUSUAL

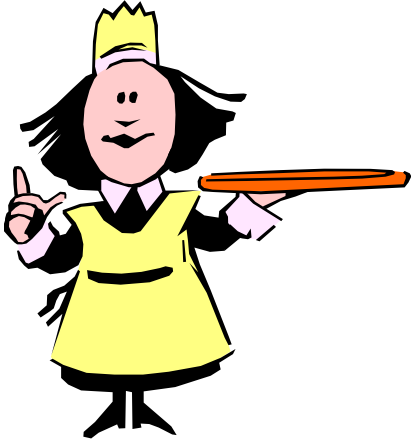


Although you must usually wear a server's uniform at work, add a distinctive element of clothing, jewelry or other adornment to your uniforms so that you stand out. This will help customers perceive you as an individual person rather than a faceless member of the staff. Along that line, I still remember one waitress at a NYC restaurant who waited on me several years ago. She wore a goofy hat that no one else in the restaurant was wearing. Wearing that hat made the waitress seem more interesting and personable and it increased the tip she got from me.

More formally, similar effects of adornment on tipping were observed in a study by Jeri-Jayne Stillman and Wayne Hensley. For this study, six waitresses at an upscale restaurant agreed to record information about their dining parties for four nights and to wear a flower in their hair for two of those nights. Which two of the four nights the flower was worn was determined randomly for each server. Each night, those waitresses in the flower condition were "provided a selection of flowers from which one was chosen for the evening." The results indicated that the waitress' tips increased from about \$1.50 per-customer in the control condition to about \$1.75 per-customer in the flower condition. They earned 17 percent more simply by wearing flowers in their hair.

The results of this study suggest that (if possible) you should wear something unique or unusual when you work. Whether it is a flower in your hair, a loud tie around your neck, or a funny button on your shirt, wearing something that stands out as unique or unusual will personalize you to your customers and will result in larger tips. However, take care not to wear things with political, religious, or otherwise controversial messages and meanings so as not to offend those customers with different points of view.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF BY NAME



Introduce yourself by name when greeting their customers. If done properly, these introductions make you seem friendly and polite and make the customer feel more empathy for you. Both of these effects should increase tips.

Kimberly Garrity and Douglas Degelman tested this expectation in an experiment conducted at a Charlie Brown's restaurant in southern California.

Two-person parties coming to the restaurant for Sunday brunch were included in the study and were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the name condition, a waitress approached her tables, smiled, and said "*Good morning. My name is Kim, and I will be serving you this morning. Have you ever been to Charlie Brown's for brunch before?.*" In the no-name condition, the same approach, smile and greeting were used except that the waitress omitted her name. This manipulation had a large and statistically significant effect on tips. The waitress received an average tip of \$3.49 (15%) when she did not give her name and received an average tip of \$5.44 (23%) when she did give her name. This waitress earned almost \$2.00 more from each table when she introduced herself by name!

The results of this study suggest that you should introduce yourself by name to your tables. Of course, these self-introductions need to be made with a genuine and professional attitude. Surly or insincere introductions are likely to backfire. The words "Hi, I'm ___ and I will be serving you this evening" can be irritating if said in an uncaring or automatic way. However, if you introduce yourself in a sincere and professional way, customers should leave you larger tips.

SQUAT NEXT TO THE TABLE



Most servers stand throughout the service encounter. Instead, you should experiment with squatting down next to the table when interacting with your customers. Squatting down next to a table does at least three positive things: (1) it increases the congruence between your and your customers' postures, (2) brings your eye level down to the customers' eye levels (which facilitates eye contact), and (3) brings your face closer to the customers' faces. Research on non-verbal communication has found that these three factors -- postural congruence, more eye contact, and greater proximity -- are associated with greater rapport and liking. Consumers report that they tip friendly servers more than they do less friendly servers, so squatting down next to the table should increase tips.

Kirby Mynier and I tested this expectation at two restaurants in Houston, Texas. A Caucasian waiter at a Mexican restaurant, and an Asian waitress at a Chinese restaurant, flipped coins to randomly determine whether they would squat down or stand during their initial visits to tables. Otherwise, the servers tried to treat all their tables identically. As expected, squatting down significantly increased the tips of both servers. The waiter received an average tip of \$5.18 (15%) when he remained standing throughout the service encounter and received an average tip of \$6.40 (18%) when he squatted down during his first visit to the table. The corresponding numbers for the waitress were \$2.56 (12%) and \$3.28 (15%).

Overall, the servers received approximately \$1.00 more from each table that they squatted next to. This is a substantial payoff for a simple, low cost behavior. Squatting

down next to a table is too informal to do in fine dining restaurants, but if you work at a casual dining establishment, you should squat down next to your tables or even pull out a chair to sit at the table when taking orders. Of course, you need to exercise some judgment about whether or not a given table will welcome such informality. However, the research described above suggests that these actions are generally welcome and will result in higher incomes for those servers willing to engage in them.

REPEAT CUSTOMERS' ORDERS



Being mimicked or copied can be irritating when it is obvious and prolonged. That is why mimicry is so popular among children as a means of tormenting their siblings. However, researchers have found that briefly and subtly imitating or mimicking others increases those others' liking for, and interpersonal closeness to, the imitator. This suggests

that you may be able to increase your tips by subtly mimicking your customers' verbal behavior.

Rick van Baaren and his colleagues tested this possibility at a restaurant in the Netherlands. Two waitresses randomly assigned their customers to either a mimicry or a non-mimicry condition. In the mimicry condition, the waitresses literally repeated customers' orders when taking those orders. In the non-mimicry condition, the waitresses did not repeat the orders but did indicate that they got the order by saying things like "okay!" or "coming up!" Mimicry increased the number of customers who left a tip from 52 percent in the non-mimicry condition to 78 percent in the mimicry condition. It also doubled the average tip of those leaving tips from 1.36 Dutch guilders in the non-mimicry condition to 2.73 Dutch guilders in the mimicry condition!

Tipping practices are much different in the United States than in the Netherlands, so mimicry may not produce quite as dramatic an effect in this country as it did in the above study. However, human nature is basically the same everywhere, so that study does suggest you can increase your tips to some degree by repeating your customers' orders. Given the low cost of this behavior, it is certainly a tactic worth trying.

SMILE AT CUSTOMERS



Smiling is a well known tactic of ingratiation and social influence. It is a rare person who hasn't heard the phrase "Smile and the whole world smiles with you".

Research has confirmed the cultural wisdom on smiling and has found that smiling people are perceived as more attractive, sincere, sociable and competent than are unsmiling people. These interpersonal effects of smiling

suggest that you may be able to increase your tip earnings by smiling at your customers.

Kathi Tidd and Joan Lockard tested this possibility at a cocktail lounge in Seattle, Washington. Customers sitting alone in the lounge were used as subjects. The waitress who waited on these customers randomly assigned half of them to receive a large, opened-mouth smile and the other half to receive a small, closed-mouth smile. Those customers receiving a small smile left an average tip of 20 cents, while those customers receiving a large smile left an average tip of 48 cents. This represents an increase of 140 percent!

The average bill and tip sizes in restaurants are typically much larger than in cocktail lounges, so smiling probably will not have quite as dramatic an effect on the tips of restaurant servers as it did on the tips of the cocktail waitress in this study. However, these results do indicate that smiling increases tips. You should try giving customers big, open-mouthed smiles and see how much your tips improve.

SELL, SELL, SELL!!!



In most areas of the United States, it is customary to tip waiters and waitresses 15 to 20 percent of the bill.

National surveys indicate that about 75 percent of restaurant patrons do base their tips on a percentage of the bill. Thus, dollar-and-cent tip amounts increase with bill size. In fact, a recent review of research on tipping found that bill size was *twice as powerful as everything else combined* in determining the size of tips left by different dining parties!

This means that the best way for you to increase your tips is to increase your sales.

During a slow shift, sales can be increased through suggestive selling. Thus, you should recommend appetizers, liquor, wine, expensive entrée selections, and desserts during slow shifts. Although some of you may already see the link between suggestive selling and bill sizes, others will question their ability to substantially alter their customers' orders and expenditures.

A server's ability to upsell was addressed in an experiment by Suellen Butler and William Snizek. They had a waitress at an upscale, "fancy" dining restaurant in the northeastern United States try suggestive selling on alternate weeks of a six week period. In the suggestive selling condition, the waitress did the following things as described by the researchers.

"Upon initial contact with the group the waitress suggested, 'Would anyone care for a drink?' After consumption of the first cocktail, groups subject to manipulative treatment were asked to consider a second

cocktail. These initial steps were followed by the waitress-researcher prompting the group for the dinner order asking first who would care for an appetizer. During the process of ordering dinner, the waitress recommended to the undecided certain items. At this point the most expensive items were always promoted. The waitress checked back twice during the consumption of the main course ... at which time the waitress promotes further consumption of liquor. Finally, upon completion of the main course the waitress suggested dessert or after dinner drinks."

Following these procedures increased the average tab by 23 percent. That translates into a similar increase in tips! Thus, you can earn more money during a slow shift by practicing suggestive selling.

During a busy shift, however, suggestive selling may be counter-productive because add-on sales may increase the customer's meal duration and slow down table turnover. Your total tips at the end of the shift depend on your total sales. Since entrées are more expensive than appetizers and desserts, you should avoid suggestive selling of appetizers and desserts in favor of turning tables quickly as long as new customers are waiting to be seated. When turning tables is not possible, then sell more appetizers and desserts.

TOUCH CUSTOMERS



Touching is a powerful form of interpersonal behavior that can communicate affection, appreciation, aggression, dominance, social support, or other meanings depending on the context in which it occurs. In commercial settings, casually touching customers has been shown to increase the time they spend shopping in a store, the amounts that they purchase, and the favorability of their store evaluations. These positive effects suggest that being touched may also increase the tips that customers leave their servers.

April Crusco and Christopher Wetzel tested this possibility at two restaurants in Oxford, Mississippi. Three waitresses at two restaurants randomly assigned their customers to one of three touch conditions. Customers either were not touched, were casually touched on the shoulder once for about one and a half seconds, or were casually touched on the palm of the hand twice for about half a second each time. All touches occurred as the waitresses returned change to their customers at the end of the meal. Eye contact was avoided during this process.

The effects of the touch manipulation were significant. Customers left an average tip of 12% when they were not touched as compared to 14% when they were touched once on the shoulder and 17% when they were touched twice on the palm of the hand. Subsequent research conducted by various other researchers has demonstrated that: (1) casually touching customers increases the tips of both male and female servers, (2) touching increases tips more when waitresses touch the female members of mixed-sex dining parties than when they touch the male members of those

dining parties, and (3) touching increases the tips of young customers more than those of older customers.

The results of these studies suggest that you should reach out and briefly touch your customers. Many servers will feel uncomfortable with this recommendation -- fearing that customers might object to being touched. However, the research suggests otherwise. Furthermore, researchers have found that many subjects whose behavior has been influenced by touches are unaware that they have been touched. This being the case, you may find that the benefits of briefly touching customers more than outweigh the slight risks involved.

ENTERTAIN CUSTOMERS



People go to restaurants for entertainment as well as for food. That is why restaurants have a long history of hiring musicians and/or singers to perform in their dining rooms. It is also why recent years have seen the creation and spread of a whole new class of “eatertainment” and theme restaurants, such as Chuck E. Cheese, Hard Rock Cafe, Planet Hollywood, and Rainforest Cafe. Whether you work in one of these theme restaurants or not, your customers have come to be entertained and that desire gives you an opportunity to earn larger tips. I’m not necessarily talking about singing or dancing, but research indicates that servers who recognize and satisfy their customers’ needs for entertainment are tipped more than those who do not.

In one study conducted in France by Nicolas Gueguen, waiters and waitresses at a bar gave half their customers a card with the following (admittedly weak) joke written on it:

“An Eskimo had been waiting for his girlfriend in front of a movie theatre for a long time and it was getting colder and colder. After a while, shivering with cold and rather infuriated, he opened his coat and drew out a thermometer. He then said loudly, ‘If she is not here at 15, I’m going!’.”

Forty-two percent of those customers receiving the joke card left a tip as compared to only 25 percent of those not getting the joke card. Moreover, those customers who did tip left more in the joke-card condition (average tip of 23 percent) than in the no-card condition (average tip of 16%).

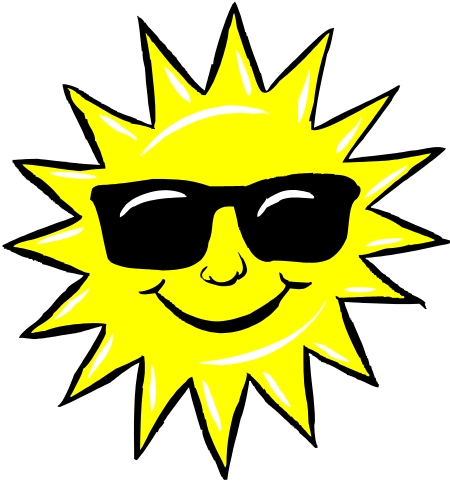
In another study conducted by Bruce Rind and David Strohmetz, a New Jersey waitress gave half of her customers a card with the following words:

“FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC
STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.”

She encouraged the customers to count the number of “F’s”. Most people tend to miss the Fs in the words “OF” because they are pronounced “V.” Thus, customers were often surprised when the waitress told them the correct number of Fs was six. They also gave her larger tips than those customers not given a card – an average tip of 22 percent versus an average tip of 19 percent.

As these studies testify, you don’t have to be Robin Williams or Kelly Clarkson to entertain your way into a bigger tip. So, collect jokes or simple puzzles to share with your customers and let the entertainment begin!

FORECAST GOOD WEATHER



Sunny weather puts people in a good mood and people in a good mood leave bigger tips than those in a bad mood. Even the prospect of sunny weather tomorrow elevates people's moods. This suggests that servers who live where the weather is highly variable can increase tips by telling their customers that sunny weather is on the way.

To test this idea, Bruce Rind and David Strohmets had a waitress at a mid-priced Italian restaurant in New Jersey write a weather forecast on the backs of some of her checks but not others. The favorable weather forecast read:

"The weather is supposed to be really good tomorrow. I hope you enjoy the day!"

The waitress received an average tip of 22.2 percent when she forecast good weather and an average tip of 18.7 percent when she made no forecast. That is a 19 percent increase!

Although you should not lie to customers, you too should try to profit from favorable weather forecasts. Simply keep up with the local weather forecast and remind your customers that good weather is on the way when the forecast really is positive. You can try giving these forecasts orally, but I would recommend writing them on the check as was done in this study. Speaking is quicker and easier than writing, but spoken words can be easily missed or ignored while written ones cannot. In addition, part of the effectiveness of the written forecasts in the study described may have depended on the perceived effort of the server. If so, you will want to duplicate that effort.

WRITE “THANK YOU” ON CHECKS



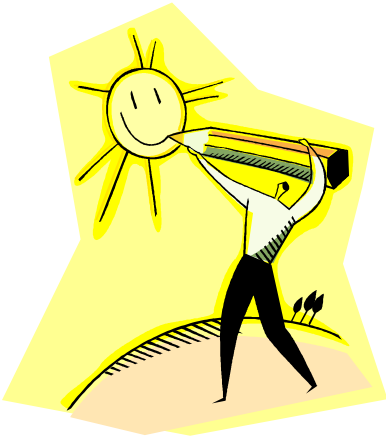
Try writing “Thank you” and signing your name on the backs of checks before you deliver the checks to your customers. These expressions of gratitude may make you seem friendlier, which should increase your tips

because consumers tip friendly servers more than they do unfriendly ones. Expressions of gratitude may also make customers feel obligated to earn that gratitude by leaving larger tips. Whatever the mechanism involved, expressions of gratitude are likely to increase the tips you receive.

Bruce Rind and Prashant Bordia tested this expectation at an upscale restaurant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A waitress, whom we will call Anne, conducted this study by randomly assigning her lunch customers to one of three conditions. On the back of the check, she wrote nothing, “*Thank you*”, or “*Thank you, Anne.*” As expected, this manipulation significantly affected the size of the waitress’ tips. She received an average tip of 16% when nothing was written on the back of the check and she received an average tip of 18% when she wrote “Thank you” on the back of the check. Adding her signature to the thanks produced the same level of tips as the thanks alone.

Since there is little downside to expressions of gratitude, you should always write “Thank you”, or some comparable message, on the backs of your checks. To avoid time pressures during busy shifts, you can write these messages on your checks before customers arrive. Doing so will only take a few minutes of your time and should increase your tip income.

DRAW PICTURES ON THE CHECK



Occasionally, waitresses will draw a “smiley face” on the backs of checks. Perhaps, you or servers you know have done this. These drawings are likely to have any of three effects on consumers. First, they may personalize you to customers and increase their empathy for you as a person. Second, drawings of “smiley faces” may communicate to customers that you were happy to have served them, which would ingratiate you to the customer. Finally, seeing “smiley faces” drawn on checks may simply make customers smile themselves and, thereby, improve their moods. All of these potential effects suggest that drawing a “smiley face” on the backs of checks will increase tips.

Bruce Rind and Prashant Bordia tested this possibility in a study conducted at the same upscale, Philadelphia restaurant that was the setting for their “Thank you” research. A waiter and a waitress at the restaurant conducted this study on their lunch customers. Half of these customers received a check on which the server had drawn a “smiley face” and half received a check without the drawing. The assignment of a table to conditions was made at the end of the customer’s meal, when the majority of the service had already been rendered, and the server was ready to deliver the check. At that time, the server randomly determined the condition the table was assigned to and either drew a “smiley face” on the check or did not.

This manipulation significantly affected the waitress’ tips, but not those of the waiter. The waitress received an average tip of 28% when nothing was drawn on the check and received an average tip of 33% when she drew a “smiley face” on the back of the check. Drawing a “smiley face” increased the waitress’ tips by 5% of the pre-tax bill

size! However, no comparable effect was observed for the waiter. He received an average tip of 21% when nothing was drawn on the check and received an average tip of only 18% when he drew a smiley face on the back of the check. This decrease in tip size was not statistically significant, but it suggests that drawing a “smiley face” may actually backfire for waiters. Perhaps “smiley faces” are too emotional and feminine to seem normal coming from waiters.

Based on the results of this study, I suggest that waiters can improve their tips by drawing “smiley faces” on their checks. Waiters may still be able to personalize their checks with drawings, but will need to choose a different object to illustrate. Perhaps waiters at an upscale seafood restaurant could make a simple line drawing of a lobster on the backs of checks. Alternatively, waiters could try drawing a picture of the sun. One study conducted by Nicolas Gueguen at a bar in France found that drawing a picture of the sun on checks increased the percentage of customers leaving a tip from 21 percent to 38 percent. The drawing also increased the average size of the tips that were left from 19 percent of the bill to 26 percent of the bill.

The lessons from this research are clear. You do not need to be Picasso to draw larger tips from your customers. So pick up a pencil and start doodling!

USE TIP TRAYS WITH CREDIT CARD INSIGNIA



Restaurants often post signs informing customers that credit cards are accepted. These signs, and other displays of credit card insignia, can be seen on restaurant doors, windows, counters, menus, table tents, tip trays and cash registers. Although it is not clear why, research has found that simply seeing these insignia increases consumers' willingness to spend money. So, whenever possible, you should use those tip trays and folio booklets with credit card logos.

Michael McCall and Heather Belmont tested the effects of following this suggestion at two establishments -- a family restaurant and a cafe -- in upstate New York. The presence versus absence of credit card insignia was manipulated in these establishments via tip trays, some of which had credit card emblems on them and some of which did not. These tip trays were randomly mixed and servers were instructed to take trays as needed from the top of the stack. At both establishments, customers tipped significantly more when the bill was presented on a tip tray containing a credit card emblem. Tips increased from 16% to 20% of pre-tax bills at the restaurant and increased from 18% to 22% of pre-tax bills at the cafe. This effect was not due to an increased use of credit cards to pay the bill. In fact, all of the cafe's customers paid cash. Simply seeing the credit card insignia on the tip trays caused customers to tip an additional 4% of their pre-tax bill amounts!

In light of these results, you should ask your manager to replace plain tip trays with trays that contain credit card emblems. These tip trays can be obtained at little or no cost from credit card companies and using them will increase your tips.

GIVE CUSTOMERS CANDY



People generally feel obligated to reciprocate when they receive gifts from others. You can benefit from this by giving your customers after-dinner mints or candies. Upon receiving such gifts, most customers will reciprocate by increasing their tips.

David Strohmetz and his colleagues tested this expectation in two studies. One study conducted in Ithaca, New York, found that giving customers fancy chocolates increased tips from 15 percent of the bill to 18 percent of the bill. The second study conducted in New Jersey found that gifts of Hershey assorted miniature chocolates also increased tips. The highest tips were received when the server gave dining parties one piece of candy per person and then spontaneously offered them a second piece per person. In that condition, the average tip was 23 percent of bill size as compared to an average tip of 19 percent when no candy was given.

These findings suggest that you should “sweeten the till” by giving your customers after dinner candies of some kind. If your restaurant does not supply mints or candies to be given to customers, you should procure them yourself. Hershey’s Kisses, for instance, can be purchased at very little costs and the investment should more than pay for itself.

CALL CUSTOMERS BY NAME

Calling people by their names tells them that they are considered important. Most people find such recognition flattering and enjoyable. Thus, you should get larger tips when you call your customers by name (which you can learn from their credit cards or when they give their names while waiting for a table).



The effect of calling customers by name was tested by Karen Rodrigue at several restaurants in Kansas. The study focused on customers paying by credit card. Waiters and waitresses randomly assigned those customers to a name or a no-name condition. In the name condition, the servers noted the customers' names on their credit cards and thanked them by name (e.g., "Thank you *Mr. Jones*") when returning the credit cards and charge slips. In the no-name condition, servers thanked the customers without mentioning their names.

Customers left an average tip of 14 percent in the no name condition and an average tip of 15.4 percent in the name condition. Saying two words – the customer's name – increased the servers' tips by 10 percent. This finding suggests a new answer to the old question "What's in a name?" That answer is "bigger tips."

TABLE 1. Summary of experiments and quasi-experiments on restaurant tipping.

Tip Enhancing Action	Average Tip in the		Percentage Increase in Tip
	Control Treatment	Experimental Treatment	
Wearing a Flower in Hair	\$1.50 p/person	\$1.75 p/person	17%
Introducing Self by Name	15%	23%	53%
Squatting Down Next to Table			
Waiter	15%	18%	20%
Waitress	12%	15%	25%
Repeat Order Back to Customer	2.73 Dutch Guilders	1.36 Dutch Guilders	100%
Smiling	20 cents	48 cents	140%
Suggestive Selling (tip estimated at 15% of bill size)	\$1.53 p/person	\$1.25 p/person	23%
Touching Customer			
Study 1	12%	17%	42%
Study 2	11%	14%	27%
Study 3	15%	18%	22%
Study 4	12%	15%	28%
Entertaining Customer			
Tell a Joke	16%	23%	40%
Give a Puzzle	19%	22%	18%
Forecast Good Weather	19%	22%	18%
Writing "Thank You" on Check	16%	18%	13%
Drawing a Picture on Check			
Waiter drawing smiley face	21%	18%	----
Waitress drawing smiley face	28%	33%	18%
Bartender drawing sun	19%	26%	37%
Using Tip Trays w/ Credit Card Insignia			
Restaurant	16%	20%	25%
Cafe	18%	22%	22%
Give Customer Candy			
Study 1	15%	18%	18%
Study 2	19%	23%	21%
Call Customer by Name	14%	15%	10%

HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR OWN TESTS



The techniques for increasing tips described above have all been tested and found to be effective. I have no doubt that many of these techniques will work for you too. However, there is no guarantee that every technique will work as well for you as it did for the servers in the relevant studies. You are a different person who lives in a different region of the country and who works in a different restaurant with different customers. Therefore, you may want to test the techniques yourself to identify those that are most effective for you and your circumstances. You may also have your own ideas about how to earn larger tips and want to test those ideas. Let me tell you how to do this in the paragraphs below.

To begin with, as you know, the size of tips varies from one customer to the next, from one work shift to the next, and even from one month to the next. This variability in tip sizes makes it difficult through casual observation alone to be certain about the effectiveness of techniques to increase tips. If you try a technique on one customer but not another, or on one work shift but not another, any differences (or absence of differences) in tips could be due to this natural variability in tips rather than to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the technique. Therefore, you should conduct more systematic experiments to test these techniques.

To conduct a true experiment, you need to randomly determine when to use the technique (called the treatment condition) and when not to use it (called the control condition). Random assignment distributes the various other factors that affect tipping evenly across the treatment and control conditions, so you can be certain that any large

difference in tips between the treatment and control groups is caused by the technique being tested. The easiest way to do random assignment is to flip a coin – using the technique when the coin comes up heads and not using the technique when the coin comes up tails. This can be done on a customer-by-customer basis if you want. Such a customer-by-customer assignment to conditions will require you to keep records of how much each customer tipped. However, it is the fastest way to get enough data for a meaningful test. You will need 30 to 50 dining parties *in each condition* and this can often be obtained in just a few work shifts.

Alternatively, you can use a coin flip to randomly assign entire work shifts to either the treatment or control conditions. You will need to have 10 to 20 work shifts *in each condition*, so this approach will take longer to finish. However, it does have the advantage of allowing you to treat every customer the same way on any given day. It also allows you to keep records of your tips on a daily rather than a customer-by-customer basis, so this is the easiest experiment to perform.

Once you have the data, you can simply compare the average tips in the treatment condition with those in the control condition. If the difference is large enough, you may be satisfied with that simple comparison. However, if the difference is modest, you may legitimately wonder whether it is caused by the effectiveness of the technique being tested or by chance. You will have to do a statistical test to answer that question. Since many of you will be unfamiliar with statistics, I would be happy to perform such a statistical test for any server who sends me their data along with a description of how they conducted the study. Just send contact information and a copy of your records to me at the address on page 2 of this booklet. Alternatively, e-mail the information to me at WML3@Cornell.edu. Even if you decide not to conduct a systematic test, I would love to hear about your experiences using these tip enhancing techniques, so please write or e-mail me.

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THANK YOU



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A former bartender, busboy and waiter, Mike received his Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the Ohio State University in 1987 and has taught in the marketing departments of business and hospitality schools since 1988. He is currently an associate professor of consumer behavior and marketing at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration. He has a wife, two children, and two dogs.

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