

Bar Opening Checklist

Your Daily Blueprint for Bar Success

1. EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY CHECKS

Draft Beer System

- Check CO₂ pressure levels (12-14 PSI for most beers)
- Test all taps - no excessive foam or dripping
- Verify all lines flow smoothly without sputtering
- Check beer line temperatures

Refrigeration Units

- Verify walk-in cooler temperature (38-40°F / 3-4°C)
- Check back bar refrigerator temperatures
- Ensure all doors seal properly
- Test refrigerated display cases

Ice Machine

- Verify ice production and quality
- Clean storage compartment if necessary
- Check for drain obstructions
- Ensure proper ice bin sanitation

POS System and Technology

- Boot up and test POS system
- Verify internet connection
- Test receipt printer functionality
- Check credit card terminals
- Sync with management system

Bar Equipment

- Test blenders and mixers
- Verify coffee/espresso machine functionality
- Check soda gun dispensers
- Test water taps and pressure



2. INVENTORY AND STOCK VERIFICATION

Premium Spirits (80/20 Rule Focus)

- Count top-shelf whiskeys, vodkas, and premium spirits
- Verify high-velocity items stock levels
- Check keg weights or use scales for remaining volumes
- Review opened wine bottles - discard if necessary

Non-Alcoholic Beverages

- Verify soda and juice stock levels
- Check mixers, tonic water, and club soda
- Review syrup and simple syrup levels
- Check milk and cream expiration dates

Garnishes and Accompaniments

- Prepare fresh citrus (lemons, limes, oranges)
- Check olives, cherries, and jarred garnishes
- Verify fresh herbs (mint, basil, etc.)
- Count cocktail straws, napkins, and accessories

Bar Consumables

- Count clean glassware by type
- Verify cocktail napkin stock
- Check decorative picks and umbrellas
- Review dishwasher soap levels

3. CLEANLINESS AND SANITATION STANDARDS

Work Surfaces

- Clean and sanitize main bar top
- Sanitize all work surfaces with approved sanitizers
- Clean and dry bar sinks
- Disinfect tap handles and dispensers

Glassware and Barware

- Inspect glasses - discard chipped or scratched items
- Remove water spots and soap residue
- Polish wine glasses and cocktail glassware
- Organize glassware by type and size

High-Touch Areas

- Disinfect door handles
- Clean POS screens
- Sanitize beer taps and dispensers
- Wipe down bar stools and tables

Ice Bins and Containers

- Clean and sanitize ice bins (ice is food!)
- Check for residue in storage containers
- Verify garnish containers are clean
- Replace ice bin water if necessary

Line Maintenance (Weekly Schedule)

- Schedule beer line cleaning
- Review previous cleaning log
- Check for off-flavors in draft beer

4. STAFF PREPARATION AND SCHEDULING

Team Briefing

- Review daily specials and promotions
- Go over new cocktails or menu changes
- Assign sections and responsibilities
- Communicate special events or large reservations

Staff Verification

- Confirm all shifts are covered
- Check uniforms and personal presentation
- Verify current certifications (food handler's permits, etc.)
- Assess team energy and readiness

Training and Reminders

- Review signature cocktail preparation techniques
- Remind team of service standards
- Review safety procedures
- Confirm knowledge of pricing and promotions

5. TIME MANAGEMENT AND SCHEDULING

Critical Path Items (First Hour)

- 45 min before:** Start equipment requiring warm-up time
- 30 min before:** Complete safety verifications
- 20 min before:** Finish garnish preparation
- 10 min before:** Final team briefing

Sequential Dependencies

- Check CO₂ levels → Test beer taps
- Turn on refrigeration → Verify temperatures
- Set up workstation → Organize tools
- Complete cleaning → Prepare fresh garnishes

Buffer Time Planning

- Reserve 15-20% extra time for unexpected issues
- Identify tasks that can be delayed if necessary
- Have backup plans for equipment failures

6. COMPLIANCE AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Temperature Logs

- Record refrigerator temperatures with timestamps
- Document walk-in cooler temperatures
- Log readings in health department compliance book

Licenses and Documentation

- Verify liquor licenses are visible and current
- Check food handler certifications
- Ensure required signage is properly displayed

Safety Equipment

- Verify emergency exit visibility and lighting
- Check fire extinguisher pressure and inspection date
- Locate first aid kit and verify contents
- Test emergency lighting systems

Inventory Control for Compliance

- Record alcohol levels for tax compliance (if required)
- Verify all products are within expiration dates
- Document any discrepancies or losses

7. FINAL VERIFICATION BEFORE OPENING

Last 5-Minute Checklist

- Set music to appropriate volume
- Adjust lighting for time of day
- Arrange tables and chairs properly
- Position staff at assigned stations
- Ensure POS is ready for first transaction
- Display current menu and pricing

Manager Verification

- Manager/Supervisor signature: _____
- Opening time: _____
- Staff present: _____
- Notes/Observations: _____

READINESS SCORING SYSTEM

Score 1 point for each completed task:

- **90-100 points:** 🏆 **EXCELLENT** - Bar ready for peak performance
- **80-89 points:** ✅ **GOOD** - Solid preparation with minor details to address
- **70-79 points:** ⚠️ **ACCEPTABLE** - Some areas need attention before opening
- **60-69 points:** 🔴 **CRITICAL** - Review procedures immediately
- **Under 60:** 🚨 **HIGH RISK** - Do not open until essential tasks completed

OPTIMIZATION OPPORTUNITIES

Daily Performance Indicators

Track these metrics to improve your opening efficiency:

- **Average opening time:** _____ minutes
- **Equipment issues found:** _____ per week
- **Inventory discrepancies:** _____ per week
- **Staff readiness score:** _____/10

Weekly Review Questions

- Which tasks consistently take longer than expected?
- What equipment issues occur most frequently?
- How can we streamline our morning routine?
- What additional training does the team need?