Moving restaurant deliveries: a handling briefing

A handling briefing starts with the whole delivery task, including the route, storage destination and available help.

Practical staff guidance; adapt the suggested workflow to your venue and current procedures.

Look at the route before the load

Walk from the delivery point to the storage area. Notice doors, slopes, wet flooring, stairs, congestion and places where the load would need to be put down. Consider how service activity affects the route. A plan that works before opening may need different arrangements when customers and staff are moving through the same space.

How the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 apply to a delivery

For workplaces in Great Britain, start by asking whether the hazardous move can be avoided so far as reasonably practicable. For example, agree a drop point beside the store before a drinks delivery arrives. Where a hazardous move cannot reasonably be avoided, assess the remaining task and reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable. Check the threshold, the cage wheels, the load and the people sharing the route. A lifting demonstration alone cannot correct an unsuitable delivery route. See HSE’s guidance on the regulations.

Choose a safer handling arrangement

HSE’s approach is to avoid hazardous handling where reasonably practicable, assess unavoidable tasks and reduce the risk. Consider delivery placement, suitable aids, smaller units and changes to storage. The arrangement needs to suit the people, task and environment. A single weight figure cannot describe all of those conditions.

Brief the actual task

Show where equipment is kept and who is authorised to use it. Explain the approved route, storage position and escalation point. If help is needed, agree how it will be obtained before movement starts. Staff should be able to pause and ask for a different arrangement when the task differs from the briefing.

Use observation to improve the plan

Ask the employee to describe the route and identify a point where the task might become difficult. Record any practical demonstration or supervision needed. Review repeated difficulties with the person responsible for the assessment. Delivery timing or layout changes may solve a problem that repeated reminders leave in place.

Worked example

Fictional example: several boxes arrive while the stockroom route is obstructed. The receiver pauses the movement and calls the supervisor. They clear the agreed route and confirm the handling method before moving the accepted stock.

Your next steps

- Check the route and destination.
- Consider reducing or avoiding the handling.
- Confirm suitable aids and authorised help.
- Explain when to pause and escalate.
- Record observed difficulties for review.

Look at the whole movement

Consider where the delivery starts and finishes, the available space, steps, doorways, floor conditions and other people using the route. Check whether the movement can be avoided or reduced, and whether a suitable handling aid changes the task. A trolley still needs an appropriate route, load and user instruction. Staff should understand which deliveries need additional help and how to obtain it before they arrive.

A decision worth practising

Fictional example: a box has no clear weight marking, blocks the carrier's view and must go through a crowded doorway. The employee pauses, checks the load and asks the supervisor about a safer arrangement. Possible changes include splitting a load where appropriate, altering the delivery point or using suitable equipment. The chosen method must fit the actual contents and environment. Record a recurring awkward delivery so purchasing and suppliers can help resolve it.

Is there one safe lifting weight for everyone?

A single weight cannot account for the load, task, environment and individual. Use the assessed method and relevant instruction, and report a task that cannot be done as planned.

The delivery cage fits the doorway. Can the team move it safely?

A loaded roll cage clears the kitchen doorway by a finger's width. The usual goods entrance is closed and the alternative route crosses a sloping threshold. A driver offers to give the cage a push from behind. What changes your decision?

Compare your decision

Stop before moving onto the slope. Check the route, load stability, visibility, equipment condition and who controls the movement. Ask the responsible person to arrange a suitable route, different equipment or a smaller load. An extra pair of hands does not fix a wheel catching on the threshold.

Walk the proposed empty route with the delivery lead. Identify where the person moving the load could stop safely and where pedestrians would pass. Record the agreed route for the next delivery.

When two restaurant deliveries arrive together

The first driver is unloading. A second arrives early, and the only suitable trolley and unloading space are in use. The receiving supervisor agrees with both drivers where the second vehicle can safely wait and who will call it forward. If there is no agreed safe waiting place, route or suitable aid, pause the second delivery and agree another slot. Let the kitchen know the revised order.

Worked entry on the delivery-handling briefing sheet (fictional example): "10:05, second delivery early. Obstruction: unloading bay and trolley in use. Agreed method: second driver waits at the agreed holding

point and keeps the load on the vehicle. Receiving supervisor to call the driver forward after the first vehicle has cleared and the trolley and route have been checked. Kitchen told of delay.”

In its 11 November reminder to Northern Ireland’s haulage and logistics employers, HSENI highlighted space, handling equipment and realistic delivery schedules. The restaurant scenario above shows one way to apply those principles locally.

Sources and editorial basis

- HSE — Manual handling at work

Guidance checked on 19 October 2026. Examples and worksheets are original suggested workflows; adapt them to your operation.

Use this on shift

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