



# Outdoor Seating Areas

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I arrange the space of my outdoor seating area?

Tables and chairs should be arranged to allow for a minimum of 2 metres/6 feet between patrons seated at separate tables. Pre-existing outdoor seating area (e.g., patio) are permitted a maximum of 50% of the previously rated capacity. If creating a new outdoor seating area, plan for a minimum of 1.11 square metres of space per person.

### Can we move outdoor patrons indoors to finish drinks and/or meals in the event of bad weather?

No. Under the present Emergency Orders, there is no option to seat patrons indoors in the event of bad weather. Establishments will need to create a plan to implement in the event of bad weather. The plan needs to include how food will be packaged for take-out and a process to have patrons pay for their items. If patrons need to pay indoors and multiple people are accessing this space, a system should be implemented to ensure individuals from different groups can remain 2 metres apart while waiting in line.

### How do we arrange tables to accommodate social circles?

Social circles are allowed to a maximum of 10 patron. This means that the maximum number of patrons at one table is 10. An establishment will need a variety of table sizes to accommodate for single families or social circles of up to 10 individuals. Tables and chairs still need to be spaced to allow for 2 metres of physical distancing for patron not from the same household or social circle.

### My establishment has never used a reservation system, why do I need one now?

Using a reservation system has been requested by the Province as part of their [Stage 2 reopening framework](#) (pg. 12 under the first bullet point). Reservations are useful from a crowd control measure and can control when patrons enter and exist the establishment. Without a reservation system, crowds may form while waiting for entry, which requires a staff member to monitor the line to ensure patrons stand 2 metres apart. Reservations allow the establishment to collect names and phones numbers which are useful pieces of information from a contact tracing perspective should there happen to be a positive COVID-19 case associated with your establishment.

### Should staff (servers, cooks, greeters, etc.) wear face masks or face coverings?

All staff at food and drink establishments should be encouraged to wear a non-medical face mask or face covering, especially for the situations when physical distancing and keeping 2 metres distance from others may be challenging (e.g., setting food on the table). It is critical that physical distancing and diligent hand hygiene continue for everyone, even when a face covering or non-medical mask is used. Read more about face coverings and non-medical face masks from the [Provincial fact sheet](#).

## Can we have live entertainment as part of our outdoor seating area?

According to [Provincial Emergency Order 263/20 Stage 2 closures Schedule 2 Section 1.3](#) singing and dancing are not permitted in an outdoor seating. Live instrumental music may be permitted provided the volume is low and does not cause patrons to speak loudly or yell to be heard. Speaking loudly or yelling could cause a person to emit more respiratory droplets. Anyone at the establishment to perform instrumental music would need to be a minimum 2 metres distance from tables, and areas where servers will walk. The space needs for the live entertainment will ultimately decrease the seating capacity available for patrons.

## Can I have a tent or an awning over my outdoor seating area?

Use of an awning or outdoor seating area will depend on the location of the establishment:

- Outdoor seating areas located on private property (such as a golf course) would be permitted to have an awning or tent provided that it will not impede access to or around the area for other purposes. To ensure optimal ventilation and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, the tent must not have any walls.
- Outdoor seating areas located on public property (e.g. a shared sidewalk), are not permitted to have an awning or tent if there is any chance of obstruction of pedestrian traffic or if it creates limitations to accessibility. Consider using umbrellas for sun shade.

## Can I have an outdoor walk up bar for patrons as part of the outdoor seating area?

An outdoor walk up bar is permitted, provided that there are no restrictions by any existing permits or licences (e.g. municipal permits or AGCO liquor licence). Having an outdoor walk-up bar will ultimately reduce the number of tables, chairs, and patrons permitted, as space will need to be given for ordering and queue lines, ensuring 2 metres of physical distancing for patrons not from the same household or social circle. Ideally, service should be right to the table to prevent patrons from maneuvering around the patio area, which may create challenges for physical distancing. Patrons who are seated at an outdoor seating area should not be entering the indoor areas of the establishment to order food or drinks. Patrons who are picking up take-out orders are permitted to pick up orders from inside the establishment.

## Do the staff (servers, cooks, greeters, etc) need to physically distance from each other while working?

Yes. [Physical distancing](#) (keeping 2 metres away from anyone not from the same household or social circle) is required to control the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Each establishment is required to develop a health and safety plan to keep workers safe and healthy. [Click here](#) to learn more about restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19.

## Are picnic tables allowed as part of the table arrangement of an outdoor seating area?

Tables and chairs for patrons must be made of a non-porous material to ensure optimal cleaning and sanitation. This means that picnic tables are permitted provided it has been treated with a water sealant or a plastic or vinyl table cloth is used. It is important to note that only patrons from the same household or social circle are allowed to be seated at the same picnic table. Establishments are not permitted to seat a small group at one end of the picnic table and a separate small group at the other. This would not provide adequate distancing of 2 metres from each group.

## Do I need to open the washrooms at my establishments?

Yes. If you have an outdoor seating area you must make washrooms accessible for patrons. To do this, establishments should follow the recommendations for the [cleaning and disinfection of public settings](#). Washrooms should include [signage](#) to remind patrons about hand hygiene and physical distancing in the washroom. If you are allowing customers access to your establishments for take-out (e.g. allowing customers to queue indoors to order coffee) you should also allow access to your washrooms.