



Best Timing to Suggest Add-Ons in Drive-Thru Flow

Purpose and Use

This handout helps restaurant and quick-service teams master the timing of add-on suggestions during drive-thru service. When phrased naturally and delivered at the right moment, these prompts enhance the guest experience without interrupting speed or flow.

The focus is on precision: knowing when guests are most receptive, keeping the language simple, and maintaining the upbeat pace that defines great drive-thru service. Use this resource in team huddles, role-play sessions, or as a reference for drive-thru coaches who want to refine staff timing and confidence.



Best Timing Points

1. During Initial Order Placement

When the guest places their main order This is the best time to suggest a logical upgrade or complementary item while the guest is still in “decision mode.”

Example: "Would you like to make that a combo with our seasoned fries and a drink for just a little extra?"

Why It Works: It builds on momentum and positions the add-on as part of the order, not an afterthought.

2. Before Finalizing the Order After

The guest confirms their main items but before total or introduce a small, appealing add-on that feels like a bonus.

Example: "Can I add a warm cinnamon roll or iced coffee to go with your meal today?"

Why It Works: Guests are still in an active buying mindset, and a small prompt here often feels like a treat, not a pitch.

3. At the Payment Windows

The guest pays or waits for their order Offer one quick, low-effort option. Usually a snack, dessert, or drink that’s easy to add.

Example: "Would you like to grab a cold lemonade or one of our chocolate brownie bites while you wait?"

Why It Works: Impulse add-ons at the payment window capture attention during idle time without disrupting service flow.

Key Timing Tips

- Secure the main order before suggesting an add-on.
- Keep phrasing short and confident to match the drive-thru pace.
- Space out offers — one well-timed suggestion beats a list of options.
- Use product names that sound appetizing and visual (*e.g., iced coffee, brownie bites, cinnamon roll*).
- Reinforce positive interactions with a friendly close, even if the guest declines.

This timing model improves attach rates and guest experience by blending sales awareness with genuine hospitality.