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How to Get a 5-Star Food Hygiene Rating

A 5 on the door comes from how your kitchen runs every day, not from a tidy-up the night before. This guide explains how the score is worked out, what an officer looks at, and what to do after the visit.

By the LogYou team · Reviewed 13 November 2026 · Online version: logyou.app/how-to-get-a-5-star-food-hygiene-rating

> **The short answer**
> To get a 5, all three scored areas — food handling, premises and cleaning, and confidence in management — must be very good on the day of the inspection. No single area can score more than 5, and the total must be 15 or less. Strong daily routines and up-to-date records help most, but no app or checklist can guarantee a rating.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland uses the Food Hygiene Information Scheme, which shows Pass or Improvement Required instead of 0–5. This is general operational guidance, not legal advice or a guarantee of an inspection outcome.

01

How a food hygiene rating is worked out

At an inspection, the food safety officer scores three areas. In each one, a lower score is better: 0 means you meet or exceed the law and higher numbers mean more problems. Food handling and premises are each scored from 0 to 25; confidence in management goes up to 30.

The officer then turns those scores into a rating using both the total and your worst single area. That second rule matters: a spotless kitchen cannot make up for weak records, because one area scoring 10 stops you getting a 5 even if the total is low.

How scores map to a rating (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Rating	Total score	No single area above	What it means
5	0 to 15	5	Very good
4	20	10	Good
3	25 to 30	10	Generally satisfactory
2	35 to 40	15	Improvement necessary
1	45 to 50	20	Major improvement necessary
0	Over 50	No limit	Urgent improvement necessary

In practice: Aim for every area to be at 0 or 5. Your weakest area decides the highest rating you can get.

02

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Hygienic food handling

The officer looks at how you prepare, cook, reheat, cool and store food, and what you do to stop it being contaminated. Expect to be asked to show, not just tell: how a dish is cooled, where raw meat is kept, how a probe is cleaned.

- Keep raw and ready-to-eat food apart in the fridge, on surfaces and with separate or properly cleaned equipment.
- Check fridges and freezers every day, and write down what you did when a reading was out of range.
- Follow your safe methods for cooking, cooling, reheating and hot holding, using a clean probe where needed.
- Check use-by dates and labels, rotate stock and remove anything past its date.
- Make sure staff wash their hands properly and report sickness before starting work.

03

Premises, cleaning and facilities

This covers the condition of the building and equipment as well as how clean it is: layout, lighting, ventilation, handwashing facilities and pest control. Some fixes need money and planning, so spot them early rather than in the week of a visit.

- Keep handwash basins free to use, with hot water, soap and paper towels.
- Work to a written cleaning schedule that covers hard-to-reach areas, not just surfaces you can see.
- Use suitable cleaning and disinfecting products at the right dilution and contact time.
- Repair damaged walls, floors, seals and equipment so they can be cleaned properly.
- Look for signs of pests, keep doors and gaps proofed, and record pest checks and visits.

04

Confidence in management: where records count

This area carries the most points. The officer judges whether you have a food safety management system based on HACCP principles, whether staff follow it, and whether you can show it working. For many small caterers that is the FSA's Safer Food, Better Business pack or an equivalent system.

Records are your evidence. Gaps in the diary, temperatures written up later, or problems recorded with no action taken all reduce the officer's confidence. Your track record matters too, so fixing points from the last inspection shows the system is working.

- Keep your written procedures in line with your current menu and equipment.
- Record daily checks at the time you do them, including problems and what you did about them.
- Train or supervise every food handler for the tasks they do, and keep a record of it.
- Keep allergen information accurate and update it whenever a recipe or supplier changes.
- Make sure someone on every shift can find the records and explain the procedures.

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> **In practice:** Paper and digital records can both work. What matters is that they are accurate, complete and easy to find on the day.

05

After the inspection: appeal, reply or re-rating

You will be told your rating and why. If you think it does not reflect the conditions at the time, talk to the officer first, then you can appeal to the council. If you appeal within 21 days of receiving your rating, it will not be published online until the appeal is reviewed.

You can also publish a written 'right to reply' at any time, shown online next to your rating. Once you have made the improvements asked for, you can request a re-rating visit and include evidence of what you changed. Most councils charge a fee, and the officer looks at the whole business again, so the rating can go up, down or stay the same.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, businesses must display their rating sticker. In England, displaying it is encouraged but not currently required by law.

Common questions

Can an app guarantee a 5-star food hygiene rating?
No. Ratings are given by your local authority's food safety officer, based on what they find at the inspection. An app can help you keep checks and records organised, but it cannot award or guarantee a rating.

Why did I get a 4 when my kitchen was spotless?
A 5 needs every area to score 5 or less. If confidence in management scored 10 — for example because records were missing or out of date — the rating cannot be higher than 4, however clean the kitchen was.

Do I have to display my food hygiene rating?
In Wales and Northern Ireland, yes: the sticker must be shown at the entrance. In England it is voluntary at present, although many customers look for it.

How often will I be inspected?
Your council decides how often based on the risk your business poses, so it varies. Inspections can be unannounced, which is why records need to be kept up to date every day.

How does Scotland differ?
Scotland uses the Food Hygiene Information Scheme, run by Food Standards Scotland and local authorities. Businesses receive Pass or Improvement Required rather than a 0 to 5 rating.

Official sources

- FSA: How food hygiene ratings work
- GOV.UK: Appeal, explain or improve your food hygiene rating
- FSA: Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Brand Standard (guidance for local authorities)
- FSA: Safer Food, Better Business (SFBB)
- GOV.UK: Food safety management systems

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PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

LogYou helps with the management side of your score: daily checks prompted at the right time, named and time-stamped entries, photo proof, safe methods, staff training records and PDF reports you can find in seconds. During a visit, EHO Mode gives the officer a read-only view of the dates and sections you choose. The app does not assess or award hygiene ratings.

Works offline, unlimited team members, photo proof and EHO-ready reports. Start your free trial at **www.logyou.app**

LogYou is an independent application. It is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or part of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and it does not issue statutory food hygiene ratings. Share this guide freely.