



## How We Score and Grade

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The Health Department inspects about 24,000 restaurants a year to monitor compliance with City and State food safety regulations. Since July 2010, the Health Department has required restaurants to post letter grades showing sanitary inspection results. Restaurants with a score between 0 and 13 points earn an A, those with 14 to 27 points receive a B and those with 28 or more a C. Inspection results are posted on the Health Department's website.

### Food Safety Inspections: What's Behind the Score?

A restaurant's score depends on how well it follows City and State food safety requirements. Inspectors check for food handling, food temperature, personal hygiene, facility and equipment maintenance and vermin control. Each violation earns a certain number of points. At the end of the inspection, the inspector totals the points and this number is the restaurant's inspection score; the lower the score, the better.

The points for a particular violation depend on the health risk it poses to the public. Violations fall into three categories:

- A **public health hazard**, such as failing to keep food at the right temperature, triggers a minimum of 7 points. If the violation can't be corrected before the inspection ends, the Health Department may close the restaurant until it's fixed.
- A **critical violation**, for example, serving raw food such as a salad without properly washing it first, carries a minimum of 5 points.
- A **general violation**, such as not properly sanitizing cooking utensils, receives at least 2 points.

Inspectors assign additional points to reflect the extent of the violation. A violation's **condition level** can range from 1 (least extensive) to 5 (most extensive). For example, the presence of one contaminated food item is a condition level 1 violation, generating 7 points. Four or more contaminated food items is a condition level 4 violation, resulting in 10 points.

### When Is a Score Converted to a Grade?

Two types of inspections result in a letter *grade*: initial inspections for which the restaurant earns an A and re-inspections that result in an A, B or C.

A restaurant has two chances to earn an A in every inspection cycle. If it doesn't earn an A on the first inspection, it's scored but *ungraded*. An inspector goes back to the restaurant unannounced, typically within a month, to inspect it again and the re-inspection is *graded*. If the grade is a B or C, the restaurant will receive a grade card and a grade pending card. It can post

either card until it has an opportunity to be heard at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings Health Tribunal.

Until a restaurant has a graded inspection, it is listed as **Not Yet Graded** on the Health Department website.

### **Which Inspections Are Not Graded?**

The following are scored but not graded:

- Initial inspections that result in a score of 14 points or higher
- Monitoring inspections at a restaurant that has performed very poorly on its re-inspection. The Health Department may continue to inspect the restaurant roughly once a month until it scores below 28 or the Department closes it for serious and persistent violations.
- Inspections at new restaurants not yet open to the public
- An inspection at a restaurant seeking to reopen after the Department closed it.
- Some inspections in response to complaints
- Inspections before July 27, 2010.

### **Which Inspections Are Not Scored?**

The Department also inspects restaurants for compliance with laws not directly related to food safety, such as smoke-free air laws, laws prohibiting the use of artificial trans fat and those requiring certain chain restaurants to post calorie information. These inspections are *unscored* and are not related to grading.

### **More Information**

- [What to Expect When You're Inspected: A Guide for Food Service Establishments](#)
- [Self-Inspection Worksheet](#), a list of every violation an inspector may cite and the points for each scored violation.
- [Guide to Condition Levels](#), a description of violation severity levels, along with examples