

Glossary of Common ServSafe® Terms

To prepare for your **ServSafe Certification Exam**, you need to master key vocabulary. This list is a helpful starting point, but it's **not a substitute** for the **ServSafe Manager Seventh Edition textbook**. Use this study guide *along with* the textbook for best results.

Active Managerial Control	A commonsense approach to food safety which focuses on preventing or avoiding the top ten common causes of foodborne illness as identified by the CDC.
Air Gap	The space or gap between a clean water supply source as a faucet spout and the flood rim of a sink or basin. An air gap assures that the water in the sink cannot rise high enough to reach the faucet.
ALERT	An acronym created by the FDA to help food service operators remember to be "alert" for deliberate contamination of food. ALERT stands for Assure, Look, Employees, Reports and Threat.
Allergen	A protein in a food or ingredient that some people are sensitive to. Allergens can cause the person's immune system to react, causing an allergic reaction.
ANSI	The American National Standards Institute, which sets national standards for food service equipment.
Backflow	The reverse flow of dirty water through a cross connection backwards into the clean water supply. Back siphonage can cause Backflow through a Cross-connection.
Backflow Preventer	A mechanical device that prevents backflow by sealing off the water supply to protect it.
Back siphonage	A vacuum that is formed due to a drop in water pressure. Back siphonage can cause Backflow through a Cross-connection.
Bacteria	Microorganisms that need FAT TOM to survive and grow. They can grow in food. Bacteria are living things and can be controlled using time and temperature.
Bi-metallic Thermometer	A thermometer measures temperature through its metal stem. These thermometers typically have an analog temperature display or dial.
Biological Contamination	Contamination in food is caused by microorganisms such as Bacteria, Viruses, Parasites, Fungi or Biological Toxins.
Biological Toxin	A naturally occurring poison produced by some organisms which cause illness in people.

Calibrate	To test and adjust a thermometer as necessary before using it for taking temperatures. Thermometers are calibrated using ice water (ice point method), or boiling water (boiling point method).
CDC	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This agency assists the FDA, the USDA, and state and local health departments. They also conduct research into foodborne illness outbreaks and assist in investigating outbreaks.
Chemical Contamination	Contamination in food caused by man-made chemicals. These contaminants can include lead, zinc, copper, and certain types of pottery. These can also include food service chemicals, deodorizers, health and beauty products, polishes, lubricants, etc.
Chlorine	A chemical used in food service to sanitize surfaces and equipment.
Ciguatera Fish Poisoning	An illness caused by the toxin, Ciguatera.
Ciguatoxin	A toxin is sometimes found in the flesh of certain predatory fish which when ingested can cause illness, specifically Ciguatera Fish Poisoning.
Cleaning	The process of removing visible soil from a surface using a cleaning chemical or detergent.
Contamination	The presence of harmful substances in food.
Copper	A metal that is sometimes used to make decorative items, or cookware. Copper can be toxic if it comes in contact with acidic foods.
Corrective Action	The fifth principle for creating a HACCP plan where actions are taken is due to monitoring showing that a critical limit was not met.
Cove Base	A curved piece of material that merges the base of a wall into the floor, thus avoiding a 90-degree angle where the floor and wall meet which would be difficult to clean.
Critical Control Point (CCP)	The second principle for creating a HACCP plan where for each hazard identified by the Hazard Analysis a step in the flow of food is identified where action can be taken to prevent, eliminate or reduce the hazard.
Critical Limits	The third principle for creating a HACCP plan where minimum requirements or limits are set to prevent, eliminate or reduce a hazard.
Cross Contact	When common allergens (such as fish) come into contact with food that is not a common allergen (such as chicken). Fish can cross contact with chicken if both are fried in the same fryer oil.
Cross Contamination	When raw foods (such as raw meat) come into contact with ready-to-eat foods (such as lettuce) and allow pathogens in the raw food to contaminate the ready-to-eat food.
Cross-connection	A physical link (such as a hose) between dirty water and a clean water supply. Back siphonage can cause Backflow through a Cross-connection.

Crustaceans	A type of seafood which includes shrimp, crabs, lobsters and shrimp.
Double Check Valve	A mechanical device that prevents backflow by sealing off the water supply to protect it.
E. coli	A bacteria that is commonly found in the intestines of cattle that can contaminate meat during the slaughtering process. When eaten, E. coli produces toxins in the intestines that cause illness and can cause death.
Exclude	To not allow an employee to come to work due to illness. Common illness symptoms causing an employee to be excluded include diarrhea or vomiting.
Expediter	An employee in a restaurant setting that is responsible for ensuring prepared food is presented and garnished properly, and then quickly routed to the server(s) for delivery to the guest.
FAT TOM	An acronym for the six conditions required for bacterial growth to occur. The letters stand for: FOOD, ACIDITY, TIME, TEMPERATURE, OXYGEN and MOISTURE.
FDA	Food and Drug Administration. This agency inspects all food except meat poultry and eggs, regulates food shipped across state lines, and issues the U.S. Model Food Code.
FIFO	Acronym for "First in, first out" referring to the practice of using food in the order it was received.
Fungi	Organisms like yeast, mold and mushrooms.
Galvanized Metal	Metal that is treated with zinc oxide to prevent rusting. Zinc can be toxic if it comes in contact with acidic foods.
Garnish	A ready to eat food that is added to a dish as a decoration and an accompanying flavor (such as shredded Parmesan cheese on top of spaghetti).
HACCP	A written, documented food safety system which is typically required to be used when a food service operation is performing special handling techniques (such as vacuum packing foods).
Hand Antiseptics	Also known as hand sanitizers. These lotions or gels are used to decrease the number of pathogens on a person's hands. Hand sanitizers are sometimes used after hand washing.
Hazard Analysis (HA)	The first principle for creating a HACCP plan where biological, chemical, and physical hazards are identified so that they can be prevented, eliminated, or reduced.
Hepatitis A	A virus that spreads from person to person through a feces-to-food route. Hepatitis A can take up to 4-6 weeks before making a person noticeably ill. A common symptom is Jaundice, which occurs after someone has been sick for weeks.

High Risk Group	Some people are more likely to contract a foodborne illness. These include: the elderly, pre-school aged children, and people with compromised immune systems.
Histamine	A toxin sometimes produced by bacteria found on the surface of certain fish which when ingested can cause illness, specifically Scombroid Poisoning.
Hotel Pan	A stainless-steel pan that is commonly used in food service. Full hotel pans can hold 24-72 portions of food depending on the depth of the pan.
Infrared Thermometer	A thermometer that measures the surface temperature of food items.
Iodine	A chemical used in food service to sanitize surfaces and equipment.
Jaundice	A yellowing in appearance of the eyes and/or skin caused by illness. Hepatitis A can cause jaundice.
Latex	A common plastic used in single-use gloves. Some people are allergic to latex.
MAP	Modified atmospheric packaging. Food packaging method modifies the normal number of gases found naturally in the environment to inhibit the growth of pathogens. (See vacuum packing.)
Mechanical Dish Machine	A dishwasher whereby a rack of dishes to be cleaned is loaded into one end of the machine and then moves through multiple compartments during the washing process and finally emerges from the machine on the opposite end.
Microorganism	Small, living organisms that can be seen only through a microscope.
Monitoring	The fourth principle for creating a HACCP plan where critical limits are monitored.
Non-typhoidal Salmonella	A family of bacterium that does not cause typhoid fever, but that can infect food and cause foodborne illness. Non-typhoidal Salmonella is commonly found in poultry and eggs but can also infect many other types of foods.
Norovirus	A virus that spreads from person to person through a feces-to-food route. Norovirus is commonly referred to as the "stomach flu" or the "cruise ship virus". When ingested a person becomes infectious within hours and violently ill with vomiting and diarrhea within 24 hours.
NSF	An organization that creates national standards for food service equipment.
Ostrich/Emu	Large flightless birds are also known as ratites.
Parasite	Organisms that require a living host to inhabit and reproduce.

Par-cooking/Partial Cooking	The process of cooking a food partially, then stopping the cooking process. The food is then "finished" later. This is commonly done with large quantities of food that have to be grilled (such as chicken for a catered event), or when the food needs to be cooked quickly upon the demand of the customer.
Pasteurized	Any food product that has been treated with heat or has been irradiated to eliminate or reduce any pathogens that may be present. Milk is commonly pasteurized.
Pathogen	A microorganism that causes disease. They may cause disease directly, or by producing toxins which cause disease.
PCO	An acronym for "Pest Control Operator". A PCO is a professional person or business who is an expert in pest control.
Pewter	Metal that is made with large amounts of lead. Typically, items made from pewter are for decorative use only. Pewter can release lead and can be toxic if it comes in contact with acidic foods.
pH	pH is the measure of acidity in a food product measured on a scale of 0-14. Items that have a pH of zero are highly acidic. A pH of seven (7) is neutral.
PHS	U.S. Public Health Service. This agency assists the FDA, the USDA, and state and local health departments. They also conduct research into foodborne illness outbreaks and assist in investigating outbreaks.
Physical Contamination	Contamination in food is caused by objects that get into the food. Objects can be natural such as bones in fish, or fruit pits in a pie filling. Objects can also be man-made such as false fingernails that have become detached, hair, or Band-Aids.
Pooling	A reference to cracking open multiple eggs and placing them in a common container.
Quats/Quaternary Ammonium	A family of chemicals used in food service to sanitize surfaces and equipment.
Ratites	Large flightless birds such as Ostrich and Emu.
Ready to Eat	Any food that does not require further washing, preparation or cooking.
Record Keeping	The seventh principle for creating a HACCP plan where records such as checklists, logs, inspection reports, etc. are filed away for a period to prove that the HACCP plan is being followed.
Restraint	A tool or device used for containing hair on a person's head or face so that hair does not fall out and then into food. Common restraints include hats, hairnets, beard nets, etc.

Restrict	To not allow an employee to work with or around food due to illness but allowing the employee to come to work if there are other non-food related tasks that can be done. Typically, an employee is excluded due to sore throat and a fever.
ROP	Reduced oxygen packaging. Food packaging method that lowers the amount of oxygen in the package as opposed to the normal environment. (See vacuum packing.)
RTE	Acronym for a food that is "Ready to Eat".
Salmonella Typhi	A bacterium which is a form of Salmonella that is only found in humans. It causes typhoid fever and is commonly associated with ready-to-eat foods and beverages.
Sanitizing	The process of reducing pathogens on the surface using heat or a chemical sanitizer.
Scombroid Poisoning	An illness caused by the toxin, Histamine.
Serializing	The process of removing all pathogens on the surface. This is a process that is not done in normal food service operations.
Shellfish	A type of seafood which includes scallops, oysters, mussels, etc.
Shell stock Tags	Documentation that accompanies live shellfish upon delivery. The tags declared when, where and by whom shellfish were harvested.
Shigella	A bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Shigella is typically found in foods easily contaminated by the hands (such as salads made with TCS ingredients, i.e. Chicken salad), and in foods processed with contaminated water. Shigella can also be spread by flies.
Sous Vide	A method of treating food by partial cooking followed by vacuum-sealing and chilling. (See vacuum packaging.)
Stationary Rack Dish Machine	A dishwasher whereby a rack of dishes to be cleaned is loaded into the machine and the rack remains motionless during the washing process.
TCS food	A reference to any food that requires TIME and TEMPERATURE control for safety. These would include foods that are refrigerated, frozen, cooked, or held hot or cold once prepared.
Thermocouple/Thermistor	A device for measuring the temperature of food through a metal probe. These types of thermometers have digital displays and record temperatures instantly. Some of these devices have a few different, interchangeable probes that can be used for different purposes.
Time-Temperature Indicator	A device for measuring temperatures of food when temperature readings cannot be continuously monitored. Typically, these thermometers are found in foods that are shipped, such as FEDEX or UPS.

USDA	United States Department of Agriculture. This agency regulates and inspects meat, poultry and eggs.
Vacuum Breaker	A mechanical device that prevents backflow by eliminating back siphonage from occurring.
Vacuum Packing	The sealing of a food product in packaging after any air has been removed so that the packaging is tight and firm.
Verification	The sixth principle for creating a HACCP plan where food service operators double-check themselves to ensure that the HACCP system is working. Tools for double checking include checklists, logs, self-inspection, etc.
Virus	Like a microorganism, but technically not alive. Viruses are strands of DNA or RNA that are only able to multiply in the cells of a host. Viruses cannot grow in food and are not naturally occurring in food. Viruses are not destroyed by normal cooking temperatures. (Examples: Hepatitis-A; Norovirus.)
Water Activity (Aw)	A measure of the amount of moisture in a food product measured on a scale of zero to one (0-1). Water has water activity of one (1).

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