Risk assessment: worked example

A small cafe - a filled-in example of the risk-rated version

About this example

- This is a made-up cafe. The people, dates and details are invented to show how a finished form can look.
- The hazards are everyday ones for a small cafe. Yours will differ, so do not copy this form and put your own name on it. Walk round your own workplace and talk to your own team.
- Look at how each row works: a clear hazard, the people who might be harmed and how, what is already done, a score, one or two practical further actions with a named person and a date, and the score once those actions are done.
- Read the scores as a guide to which actions to do first. The 'after' scores are what is expected once the actions are complete, so each action has a tick box to record when it is done.
- Fire and food allergens are examples where HSE is not the only source of guidance. Where a row points you to other guidance (GOV.UK fire safety, Food Standards Agency), follow it for your own premises.

HSE's five steps in this example

1. Identify hazards: the nine rows in the table.
2. Assess the risks: who might be harmed and how, and the score for each row.
3. Control the risks: what the cafe already does, then the further action, who and when.
4. Record your findings: this form, kept where the team can see it.
5. Review the controls: a review date is set, and the form is updated if anything changes.

Risk assessment record (example)

Organisation	The Corner Cafe (example)	**Assessment by**	Sam Taylor, owner (example)
Activity or area assessed	Day-to-day cafe operation, front of house and kitchen	**Date of assessment**	03/11/2026
Review date	03/11/2027, or sooner if anything changes	**Date of last review**	First assessment

L = likelihood (1-5), S = severity (1-5), Risk = L x S. 'Risk after action' is the expected score once the further actions are done.

No.	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Risk now			What further action is needed?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Risk after action			Done
				L	S	Risk				L	S	Risk	
1	Slips and trips on wet or cluttered floors	Staff, customers and delivery drivers. Slips and trips can cause sprains, cuts, bruising or broken bones.	Spills cleaned up straight away. Wet floor sign used while cleaning. Staff wear non-slip shoes. Boxes and bags kept out of walkways. Entrance mat put out in wet weather.	3	3	**9 M**	Add a floor check to the opening and closing list. Keep a mop and wet floor sign by the kitchen door.	Sam (owner)	17/11/2026	2	3	**6 M**	☐
2	Hot drinks and steam from the coffee machine and urn	Staff and customers. Scalds and burns from hot liquid, steam or hot surfaces.	Staff shown how to use the machine. Lids on takeaway cups. Hot drinks passed over the counter, not over children's heads. Steam wand wiped and purged after use.	3	3	**9 M**	Keep a first aid kit in the kitchen and name who looks after it. Make sure staff know to cool a burn under cool running water and get help.	Sam (owner)	17/11/2026	2	3	**6 M**	☐
3	Knives and slicing equipment	Kitchen staff. Cuts to hands and fingers.	Knives kept sharp and stored in a block or rack. Chopping boards on a non-slip mat. Slicer guard always in place. Slicer unplugged before cleaning. New staff shown how to use equipment.	2	3	**6 M**	Write down when new staff are shown the equipment and who showed them (training log).	Priya (kitchen lead)	30/11/2026	1	3	**3 L**	☐
4	Lifting and carrying deliveries, milk crates and bins	Staff. Back and muscle strains, trapped fingers, dropped items.	Heavy items stored between knee and shoulder height. Trolley available. Staff told to ask for help with heavy or awkward loads. Deliveries checked in at the back door and moved straight away.	3	3	**9 M**	Ask suppliers if heavy items can come in smaller packs. Brief staff on safe lifting and team lifts.	Priya (kitchen lead)	30/11/2026	2	3	**6 M**	☐

EXAMPLE - for guidance only. Do not copy it. Assess your own workplace.

No.	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Risk now			What further action is needed?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Risk after action			Done
				L	S	Risk				L	S	Risk	
5	Electrical equipment and extension leads	Staff and customers. Electric shock or fire from damaged or overloaded equipment.	Plugs, leads and equipment checked by eye before use. Damaged items taken out of use and labelled. Sockets not overloaded. Equipment kept away from water and wiped dry.	2	4	**8 M**	Ask a competent electrician what checks suit the building and equipment, and note when they are done.	Sam (owner)	15/12/2026	1	4	**4 L**	☐
6	Fire	Everyone on the premises. Burns, smoke inhalation, serious injury.	Fire exits and routes kept clear. Extinguisher and fire blanket in the kitchen. Staff know the escape route and meeting point. Grease, rubbish and packaging not left near cookers.	2	5	**10 H**	Check there is a fire risk assessment for the premises (see GOV.UK fire safety guidance). Test the fire alarm at regular intervals and log it.	Sam (owner)	15/12/2026	1	5	**5 M**	☐
7	Food allergens	Customers with food allergies. A reaction can be serious.	Staff never guess - they check with the person in charge. Recipe and ingredient information kept in the kitchen. Customers told to ask about allergens. Separate utensils and clean surfaces for allergen requests.	2	5	**10 H**	Check Food Standards Agency guidance on allergen information and make sure all staff have read it.	Priya (kitchen lead)	30/11/2026	1	5	**5 M**	☐
8	Cleaning chemicals	Staff. Skin and eye irritation, fumes if products are mixed.	Products kept in their original labelled containers. Never mixed. Gloves provided. Stored away from food. Supplier instructions followed.	3	2	**6 M**	Keep the supplier's safety information for each product in one folder. Check gloves are in stock.	Sam (owner)	17/11/2026	2	2	**4 L**	☐
9	Closing up and handling cash	Staff closing the cafe. Threats or theft, stress, and risk of injury if confronted.	Two people close up where possible. Cash not left on the counter or on view. Takings banked regularly. Doors locked while counting.	2	3	**6 M**	Agree a simple closing routine and who to call if something feels wrong. Share it with all staff.	Sam (owner)	30/11/2026	1	3	**3 L**	☐

Scoring key

Scoring is one common way to decide which risks to deal with first. It is a tool, not a requirement. Score each hazard for the likelihood of harm (1-5) and for how serious that harm could be (1-5), then multiply the two numbers.

Risk matrix: likelihood x severity

Likelihood	Severity of harm				
	1 Negligible	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Severe
5 Almost certain	5 M	10 H	15 H	20 V	25 V
4 Likely	4 L	8 M	12 H	16 H	20 V
3 Possible	3 L	6 M	9 M	12 H	15 H
2 Unlikely	2 L	4 L	6 M	8 M	10 H
1 Rare	1 L	2 L	3 L	4 L	5 M

Score = likelihood x severity. L = Low, M = Medium, H = High, V = Very high.

What the numbers mean

	Likelihood	How likely is harm?		Severity	How serious could it be?
1	**Rare**	Very unlikely to happen	1	**Negligible**	No injury, or first aid only
2	**Unlikely**	Could happen but not expected	2	**Minor**	Injury needing basic treatment, short recovery
3	**Possible**	Might happen from time to time	3	**Moderate**	Injury or illness needing medical treatment, time off work
4	**Likely**	Will probably happen	4	**Major**	Serious injury or illness, long-term effects
5	**Almost certain**	Expected to happen, possibly often	5	**Severe**	Life-threatening injury or death, or several people seriously hurt

What the bands mean

Band	Score	What it usually means
Low (L)	1-4	Keep an eye on it. Check the controls still work at your next review.
Medium (M)	5-9	Add controls where reasonably practicable and plan the action.
High (H)	10-16	Deal with it soon. Put sensible controls in place and check them.
Very high (V)	20-25	Stop and put controls in place before the activity goes ahead.