

Word for Word

“Wait on” or “wait for”? Here’s the answer you’ve been waiting for!

Wait on and *wait for* usually have different meanings, but the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Generally, to *wait on* means to serve someone.

Examples:

Hi, I’m Tricia, your server; I’ll be waiting on you this evening.

She would wait on him hand and foot, but he would only complain in return.

In contrast, to *wait for* means “to remain stationary in readiness or expectation [of something].”¹

Examples:

Please wait for her to arrive before you begin the meeting.

She would wait for him there each day.

They had to wait for the blood test results before deciding upon the correct antibiotic to prescribe.

Occasionally, *wait on* can be substituted for *wait for*, typically if the person doing the waiting is annoyed at the prospect of having to do so.

Examples:

There they were yet again, waiting on her to arrive so they could begin the meeting.

You can wait on her to get here if you want, but I’m going home.

Reference

¹Merriam-Webster.com. Wait. Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wait>