

CHAPTER 6-DURING THE STAY ACTIVITIES

When the guest check-in in the hotel they avail the various services and facilities offered by the hotel during their stay. This is the third phase of guest cycle. This stage is very important as the guest experiences counts in repeat business and positive word-of-mouth publicity.

Hence the hotel staff should provide the various services to the guest in caring and personalized manner to ensure that they revisit the hotel as well as recommend to their colleagues and friends.

VARIOUS GUEST SERVICES-Services may vary depending on the hotel and the guest. Some guest expect the hotel to attend their messages and if mail, telephone calls and visitors when they are not present in the hotel. They may also choose to keep their valuables in safety lockers may wish for wake-up calls, and take care of their left luggage too.

Front office also handles guest paging and guest complaints as well as room change if any if situation demands.

Information Services:-This section of Front Office is responsible for the following functions:-

- a) Handles guest messages
- b) Handles guest room keys
- c) Handles guest mails
- d) Handles guest complaints
- e) Organize Paging
- f) Provides information regarding city and hotel.
- g) Assist the guests if they require any service like car booking, procure medicines etc.

Message Handling:-

One of the most important services which the **Information section** of the Front Office provides the guests of the hotel is- the **receiving and delivering of messages to various guests.**

During the stay of the guest in the hotel he may receive:-

- a) Telephone calls
- b) Visitors

There are at times important calls or visitors for a resident guest when he/she is not present in the hotel. In such situation the front desk agents take message on behalf of guest. The most important aspect of this is that the message is delivered without delay and to the right person which reflects the professionalism of the front desk employees.

- If he/she is available in the room, then the call is transferred there and also can meet the visitor in the room or in the lobby.
- When the guest is out of the room he can leave a **Location form** to the Front Desk about his whereabouts and then it becomes the duty of the Front Desk staff to collect message for him and deliver the same as early as possible according to the instruction of the guest.

A) Procedure for Telephone Calls

- i. At times the guest may not be in the room and might go out for his/her own work.
- ii. In normal procedure, the guest is supposed to leave the room key at the Front Desk and the key is kept at the **Mail & Key Rack**.
- iii. When there is a telephone call for a guest the front desk assistant should look at the information rack to see whether the guest is a resident guest, future guest or check-out guest.
- iv. In case of resident guest, the agent must check whether he/she is present in room or not. If the guest is not present in the room then agent must check the key rack for location form or any instruction left by the guest.
- v. Then, the Telephone Operator will transfer the call to the **Information section**.
- vi. The person responsible at the information section **notes down the message on a message slip**.
- vii. **Message slip is made in duplicate**; the first copy is kept in the Key Rack/Pigeon Hole in the front desk and the second copy is slipped under the door in an envelope..
- viii. When the guest arrives, the message is handed over along with the key. In case guest did not leave the keys at front desk then he will find the message in his/her room itself which was slipped through the door.

b) Procedure for a Visitor

- i. Any visitor for a resident guest necessarily comes to the Front Desk to enquire about the guest.
- ii. The Front Desk staff enquires and informs the visitor whether the guest is in the room or not.
- iii. If the guest is not in the room, then the visitor is asked whether he/she would like to leave any message for the guest.
- iv. If any message is to be taken, it is written on the **message slip**, and the procedure is same as stated earlier.

Note-

- If there is a visitor or call for a guest who has checked-out of the hotel, then the front office agent should provide the information as per the instruction left by the guest.
- If there is a call or visitor for a future guest, then he agent should note the message in a message slip and send the slip to back-office, where it should be placed along with the reservation record. While printing the reservation form on the day of arrival, the slip will be attached with the registration form so that the message can be delivered to the guest at the time of check-in.
- Some hotels have **automated system of delivering message** to the guest. The telephone in the guest room has a message indicator that can be switched on by the front desk agent in case there is a message waiting for a guest. This prompts the guest that there is message and he/she may call front desk to receive it.

Hotel IHM

Message Slip

Guest Name: _____

Room No: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

During your absence

Mr./Ms. _____

Telephone No _____

Called up

Came to see you

Wanted to see you

Please call back

Will return

Message: _____

Received by: _____

Signature of Information Assistant

DOCUMENTS

Hotel IHM

Location Form

Date: _____

If you are leaving your room and expect a phone call or visitor, please fill in this form and hand it over to the concierge counter at the reception desk.

Name of Guest _____

Room Number _____

While I am out of hotel I am expecting:-

- Mr./Ms. _____ to visit
- Telephone Call

If not in my Room, kindly locate me at (please tick)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Lobby | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poolside | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shopping Arcade | <input type="checkbox"/> | Games Room | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restaurant | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fitness Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Coffee Shop | <input type="checkbox"/> | Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bar | <input type="checkbox"/> | Night Club | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Banquet Hall | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Special Instructions _____

Signature of Guest

DOCUMENTS

Message Handling

Visitor / Phone Call

Mail & Key Rack Checked

Guest in Room

Inform Guest and
Act Accordingly

Phone Call
Transferred

Send
Visitor
To Room

Ask Visitor
To Sit in the
Lobby

Guest Not in Room

Guest in
Public Area

Guest not
in Hotel

Guest left info
at Front Desk

Location Form
Checked

Guest Easily
Located by
Paging

Guest did not
Leave Info at
Front Desk

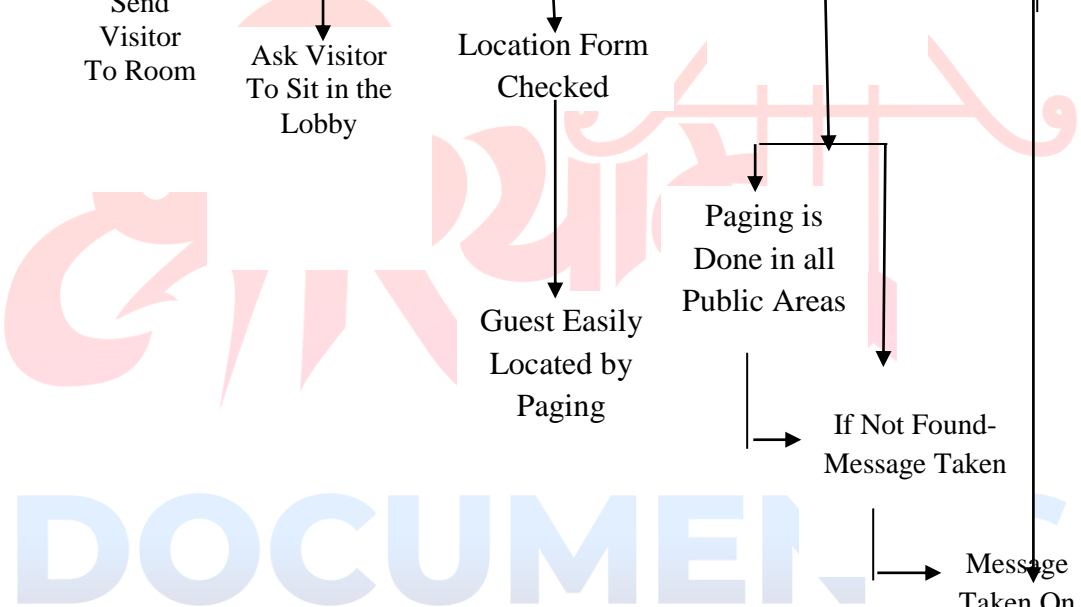
Paging is
Done in all
Public Areas

If Not Found-
Message Taken

Message
Taken On
Message Slip

Kept in the
Mail & Key Rack

Handed over to guest on return



ii) Paging:- To page means to locate or search, and when applied to the hotel industry, this means to **locate a guest in the hotel**. Guests, during their stay in the hotel may require paging service.

Procedure:-

I) If the guest is expecting a visitor or a phone call and does not want to wait in his room, then he leaves information about his whereabouts at the Front Desk and fill a location form.

II) When any visitor or phone call comes, the guest is paged and the information is conveyed to the right person.

III) In case the guest does not leave any information, then paging takes longer time and the caller or the visitor has to be kept waiting. In such case a bellboy hold a paging board above his head and shakes it so that the bells attached to it rings and attracts people's attention and moves in every possible public areas. The guest contacts the bellboy who escorts him/her to the front desk to meet the visitor.

IV) When a guest leaves his/her room, should fill a **location form** and leave at the Front Desk, which makes paging easier. (A **location form indicates where would the guest be available at a particular time and if at all he is going out of the hotel, then at what time he would be back.**)

V) The filled up location form is kept in the mail & key rack and if a duplicate copy is made (as done by some hotels), one copy is sent to the telephone operator.

Paging is done by two methods:-

- Page Board System, and
- Public Address System.

In page board system, if a visitor has come to see the guest or if there is a call for the guest, then the Information Assistant writes the name and room number of the guest on both side of the page board, which is a small board with some bells attached to it, and asks a bell boy to carry that board to the specific area which has been specified by the guest. It is important not to write any message on the page board as it may create embarrassment for the guest.

While paging through the **public address system**, the announcement is made for the guest by the Front Desk staff through the channeled music system.

Though paging through public address system is easier and less time consuming than the traditional page board system, still in hotels, the previous method is preferred. This is because, most of the times people do not bother about the announcements made in the public address system and this form of paging through the PA system is a crude form of paging. On the other hand, paging through page board has a traditional and ethnic touch, and it never goes unnoticed by the guest.

Note: When a guest leaves his room without depositing the room key at Front Desk, and Front Desk is not in a position to page for the guest at that point of time, then a Mail Advise Slip is prepared and hung on the door knob

ATTENTION	
Name	
Room No	
Date	Time
In your absence we received the following for you	
A Packet	
A Parcel	
Registered Letter	
Message	
Kindly contact the Front Desk immediately	
Signature	

Mail Advise Slip

III) Mail Handling:-

Mail Handling is a very important function which the Front Office staff has to handle in the hotel. When guests are away from their homes, they need a contact address where they can receive any urgent mail, calls, parcels or faxes etc. During their stay guest may provide their family and clients with the contact details of their hotel for any urgent communication.

All the mail addressed to hotel are received by front desk, bell desk or information desk. The Front Office staff has to be very careful that all the mails get their due attention and are attended to, without any delay to avoid any confusion.

Mails are divided into two types:-

- a) **Outgoing Mails**-In case a guest wants to send personal mails, the hotel provides the service of collecting the mails from guest room and posting them. The charges may be applied on this service and may be added to guest bill folio. They are taken care by

the Bell Desk. They have measuring scale and a stock of stamps to handle outgoing mails. A record for the same is maintained in the outgoing mail register.

- b) **Incoming Mails**-These mails arrive in mail bag which is taken to the GM's Office or Front Office Manager's Office. There the mail bag is opened and the mails are **date time stamped**.

Incoming mails are divided in two category-

- 1- **Ordinary mail**- the mails whose delivery record is not maintained by the delivering agency/post office are known as ordinary mail. Hotels keep a record of all mails received at the mail receiving desk in a mail logbook.
- 2- **Registered mail**-the mails whose delivery record is maintained by the delivering agency/post office are known as registered mail. The mail man maintains record of the delivery by asking the addressee to sign the delivery report as a token of receipt of the mail. It is advisable not to accept tampered registered mail. When registered mail is received, they are recorded in the mail logbook and the guest's signature is taken at the time of delivery.

Then the mails are **sorted into three categories:**

- i. **Mails for Management**- All the mails for management are sent to the Bell Desk for distribution to the concerned departments.
- ii. **Mails for Staff**-. The mails for staff are sent to the Time Office where they are sorted department-wise and placed in the card racks of individual staff. Employee mails are sent to time office and official mails to concerned office.
- iii. **Mails for Guests**- All the guest mails are sent to the Information section for further sorting. The mails can be of three types:-
 - Resident guests,
 - Guests expected to arrive/future guest and
 - Checked -out guests.

Procedure for handling guest mails:-

1. Stamp date and time of receipt on every mail received.
2. Sort the guest's mails.
3. Mails of resident guests are sent to the Front Desk
4. From there the Receptionist sends them to various rooms through the Bell Boys, or is kept in the key rack/pigeon holes if the guests are not in the rooms.
5. Mails of those guests **who are yet to arrive are kept in the Reservation section as per the date of arrival.**
6. They are handed over to the Reception on the date of arrival of the guest with the pre-filled registration card and handed over to guest at the time of registration.
7. Mails for departed guests are separated out.
8. **Mail forwarding address** is taken from GRC and **Mail Forwarding Slips** are prepared, entry is made in the **Mail Forwarding Register** and sent to the guest at the address mentioned in the GRC.
 - If there is no mail forwarding address then mails are sent back to the sender.
 - Rest of the mails are stored, which is one month from the date of receiving.
 - After they are retained for a month, Front Office Manager issues instructions to send them back to the sender.

Hotel IHM
Mail Forwarding Register

Sl. No.	Name of Guest	Room No.	GR C No.	Addressed to	Date and time of Receiving	Received by	Date and Time of Posting	Posted by	Remarks

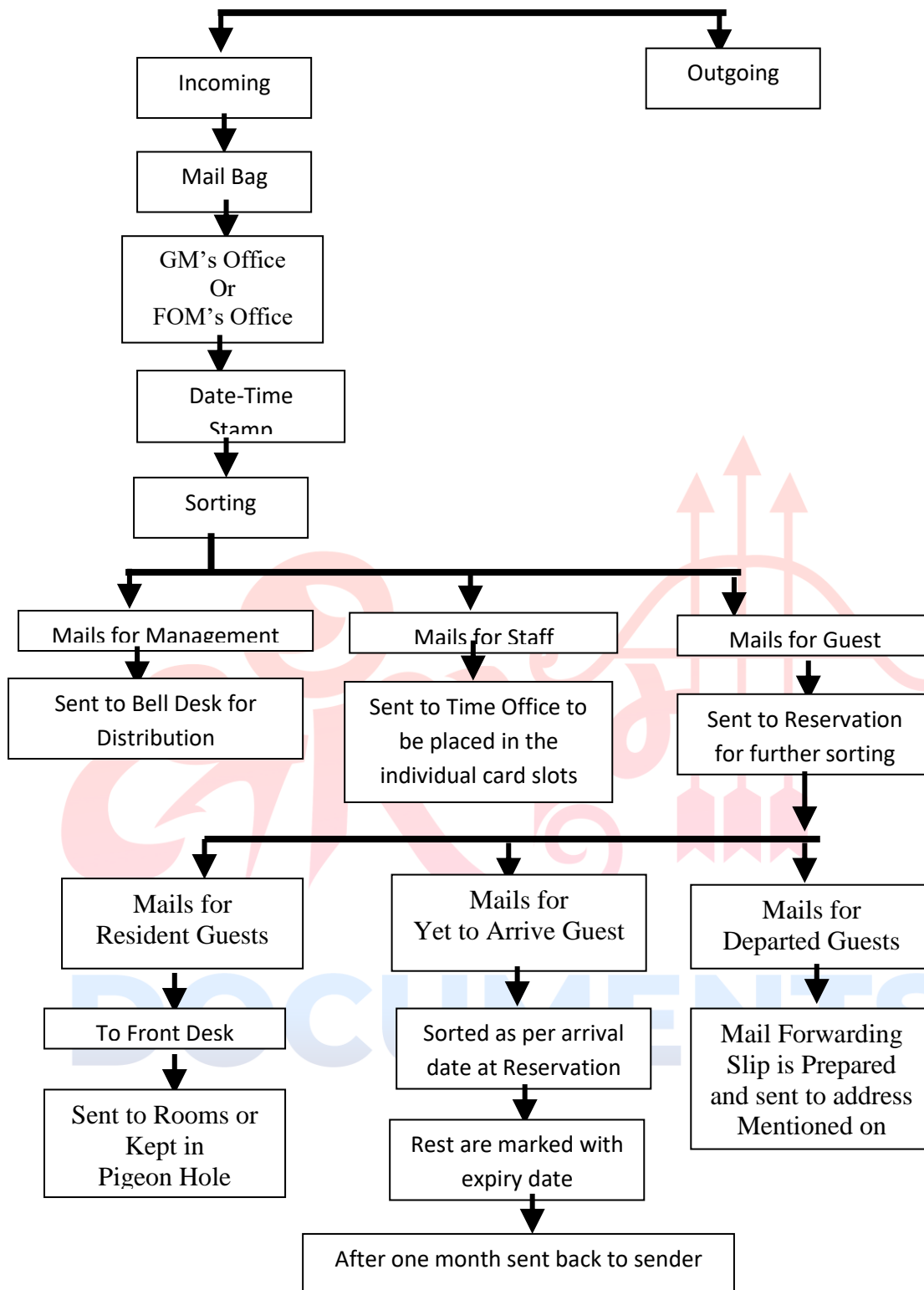
Hotel ABC
Outgoing mail register

s.no.	Room no.	Name of the guest	Addressed to	Description of mail	Charges	Received by	Date and time of receiving	Posted by	Date and time of posting	Remarks

Note: For registered mails and courier, guests are called down to the lobby to accept them directly. In their absence they are accepted at the Front Desk and later on handed over and guest is asked to sign.

DOCUMENTS

Mails



KEY HANDLING

A guest room is the most important hospitality product. One of the chief concerns of the hotel staff is to ensure the security of guest rooms, which is done by controlling the access to guest rooms by maintaining a strict control over room keys. So that-

- It prevents unauthorized access to the guest room
- It can be established how all accessed the guest room
- It ensures safety of the guest and guest belongings
- It prevents intrusion of the guest privacy.

Hotels have following systems:-

- a) **Hard key system** or
- b) **Electronic key system.**

In case the hotel uses the **Hard key system** the following security measures should be followed.

- i. Request guests to deposit the room keys at the reception while leaving the hotel premises.
- ii. Discourage guests to carry room keys with them while going out of the hotel premises. This is mostly done by putting heavy and large key tags, which are inconvenient to carry.
- iii. In an event of loss of keys, the locks should be replaced immediately.

Hotels for the security use three types of room keys:-

- A. Emergency Key
- B. Master Key
- C. Guest Room Key

A. **Emergency Key/Grand Master Key**- An emergency/Grand master Key opens the door locks of all guest rooms, even if they are double locked. Double lock is an internal safety locking device, in which if the door is locked from inside the room, it cannot be opened from the outside by its own keys or master key. The emergency key should be highly protected and should only be used in the event of an emergency. It should not be taken out of the premises, and a strict key control should be maintained for the same. Generally, the emergency key is under the control of the head of the property.

B. **Master Key**:-A master key opens all those guest room door locks that are not double locked. This key may be such that it can unlock all guest room locks or may open only specific floors guest room locks. The master key is under the control of the Executive housekeeper of the hotel. There may be several floor master keys which are used by room attendants for cleaning the guest rooms. These keys are strictly controlled and issued only to the staff on duty, who have to sign before taking the key and at the time of submitting it.

C. **Guest Room Key**- A guest room key opens the lock of an individual guest room. These keys are under the control of the front desk and are issued to guests who have registered in the hotel. Guests are required to deposit their room keys when they check-out and depart from the hotel.

CONTROL OF KEYS

FOR METAL KEYS:-



The first check on room key is done by the use of Resident Cards, which are given to guests at the time of arrival and is used by the guest to collect keys from the Front desk.

The second check is the Key Control Sheet made by the Night Receptionist through the Night Receptionist Report which shows Vacant, Occupied, Double Locked(DL), not to be allotted(NTA) etc. types of rooms. As per the check, the vacant rooms should have keys at Front Desk, and occupied rooms should not have keys in the Mail and Key Racks.

i) Those rooms, whose keys are in the rack but are occupied could be a case of Sleep Out, hence these rooms are checked.

- If luggage is found, that means the guest is in. If luggage is not found, then the bill of the room is checked with the cashier.
- If the bill is settled then departure is shown in various records as per bills and information is sent to Housekeeping.

ii) Vacant room keys which are missing from the Mail and Key Rack could be with Housekeeping or Bell Desk. It is checked and if not found an entry is made in the report.

A detail of missing key list is made. It could be that the guest did a self-departure and mistakenly taken the key. Such room numbers are noted down along with the name of the guest last stayed, and the date and time of departure. Their address is retrieved from the GRC and written to them for the missing key. This discrepancy report is sent to the Front Office Manager the next morning for investigation and taking corrective action.

ELECTRONIC KEY CARDS:-

An electronic key system is an investment in guest safety and security. For each new guest registering at a hotel, a fresh plastic, metallic or hard pressed paper key is produced each time. The room door lock combination can be changed as and when required by options available through the master computer. Hence if a guest carries away the electronic key with him/her, it will not pose any security threat. The keys can be reprogrammed with the departure time and date and after the departure date the key stops working.

Hotel IHM
Key Control Sheet

Date _____

Time _____

Keys of Occupied Rooms which Remained at Reception:

Room No.	Name	Baggage Position	Bill Amount	Remarks

Vacant Room Keys which are Not at Reception:

Keys Without Key Tags:

Details of Missing Keys:

Room No.	Name of Guest who Stayed Last	Check Out		Bell Boy Responsible for Departure	Receptionist on Duty at Departure Time
		Date	Time		

Signature of Receptionist

Safe Deposit Locker-

A key concern for the guest is the safety of their belongings, especially cash, jewellery and important documents. Hotel provides safe deposit lockers for these items. At the time of check-in, guess are advised to keep their valuable in the safe deposit locker available at the front desk. Now many hotels provide in room electronic safe deposit locker.

Lockers which are available in front desk may require two keys to operate the locker. One is given to the guest and other is with front desk.

The hotel may provide this facility for a nominal charges or no charges depending on the house policy. Guest who wished to use this facility have to sign in safe deposit locker register to get the keys of the locker.

Hotel ABC Safe deposit locker register							
S.No.	Date	Name of the guest	Room no.	Locker no.	Key issued	Guest signature	Remarks

Procedure for using the safe deposit locker-

Every hotel has its own operating procedure for the allotment of safe deposit lockers. The following are the two stages of SOP-

- Issue of locker
- Surrender of locker

Issue of locker- when guest wishes to use the locker facility extended by the hotel the following procedure is followed-

- An empty safe deposit locker is allocated to the guest with the locker number
- A safe deposit box registration is handed over to the guest to fill
- The locker is assigned and locker key is handed over to the guest.
- The guest may keep his valuables in the locker, locks the box and carries the keys.
- The guest can use the safe deposit box as and then required during his stay. He/she is required to sign the safe deposit locker register for each use.

Surrender of locker-

- The guest is requested to withdraw the belongings placed in the locker.
- The guest is requested to sign an acknowledgement that he/she has received all the belongings placed in the safe deposit locker.
- The guest surrenders the locker key to the front desk.

HOTEL ABC SAFE DEPOSIT LOCKER/BOX			
Box no.	Date issued	Issued by	Room no.
<p>Terms and conditions-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I/We shall not hold the hotel liable for any loss of Theft of or shortage in the contents of the safe deposit locker which is being issued to me/us exclusively. • In the event of loss of the keys of the safe deposit locker, I/We shall reimburse the hotel 2000/- only towards replacement. <p>Signature _____ Address _____ _____ _____</p>			
<u>Surrender of safety deposit box</u>			

The undersigned hereby surrenders above numbered box and certifies that all property placed therein has been lawfully withdrawn and is now in the possession of the management. All claims against the liabilities of the custodian are hereby released and discharged

Signature-_____ Date-_____ Time-_____ Cashier-_____

Date	Time	Signature of guest	cashier

Guest room change-

Guest room make a large component of the guests’ overall experience at a hotel. In case a room does not match the guest’s expectation, the guest may want to change the room. If the change is done in the presence of the guest, it is called a **live move**, and if it is carried out in the absence of the guest, it is known as a **dead move**.

A guest may want to change his/her room in following circumstances-

- If the room assigned is not as per choice.
- If one or more equipment are not working.
- If number of occupants in the room changes

The hotel may wish to change the guest’s room for the following reason –

- If the guest was upgraded due to non-availability of requested category of room.
- If the guest wishes overstays and the hotel does not have a room of same category.
- if room requires maintenance work

It is important for the hotel and the guest to mutually agree on the change of rooms to avoid any unpleasantness.

Procedure for changing the guest room-

- The front desk informs the guest about the room change in advance with reason (when hotel changes the room) so that guest can keep his/her luggage packed.
- Front office agent prepares six copies of ‘guest room change slip’- for reception, bell captain, front desk cashier, telephone exchange, housekeeping and room service.
- A bellboy is called and given the keys of new room assigned.
- In case of dead move, the bellboy asks the GRA to open the guest room. If it’s a live move then bellboy with permission of guest shifts the luggage.
- The bellboy removes all the guest’s belonging from the room and locks the room. After shifting all guest belonging the keys are handed over to the guest.
- He collects the keys of the room being vacated from the guest and deposits the same at the front desk.

Hotel ABC Room Change Slip	
From: Room no. _____ Rate _____	To: Room no. _____ Rate _____
Named of the guest- _____ Reason for change - _____	
Authorized by- _____	
Copy to- Reception, Bell Captain, Front Desk Cashier Telephone operator, Housekeeping, and Room Service	

Left Luggage Handling

There are times when guest checks out of their rooms but they would like to leave their luggage in the hotel and collect it later. For e.g. guest may leave in the morning leaving his/her luggage and collect it later in the evening or after couple of days. In such case his/her luggage may be store in left luggage room.

Left luggage facility in some hotel may be chargeable.

Procedure for left luggage handling-

- The agent make sure that the guest wishing to keep his/her luggage in left luggage room has settle his or her bills.
- The luggage tag is filled and tied to each luggage.
- The details of the luggage are entered in left luggage register.
- The counterfoil of the luggage tag is torn and handed over to guest. The guest requires to present the same to claim his/her luggage.

While **delivering the luggage** to the guest, the front office agent adopts following procedure-

- Request the guest to show the luggage tag counterfoil.
- Tallies the counterfoil with the tag attached to the luggage
- Make an entry in the left luggage register and request the guest to sign.
- Handover the luggage to the guest.

Room Selling Techniques

- **Telephone Salesmanship**

Since the caller is not directly in contact with the front desk staff and cannot see him it is very important that the person handling the telephone call is able to give a warm and courteous conversation to the caller. The receptionist should not have a tendency to treat such inquiries lightly, and should give his full and undivided attention. The approach of the staff will be instrumental in gaining or losing a potential sale for the hotel. Since the prospective guest is on telephone, the receptionist /reservations agent must be able to communicate to the prospective guest the product or services in such a way that the guest is able to perceive a picture of this product which matches his requirements and is immediately ready to buy it .The person describing the product should be specific while describing the room, for e. g, size, location, furnishing, fixtures etc.

- **Selling room to prospective guest who is concerned about the prices**

A guest who is not ready to pay more but at the same time expecting a superior product is very difficult job, and hence it is very important for the receptionist to picture or describe the product when quoting any rate. The receptionist should not begin with quoting a lower rate and he should offer a range of products with ranging price and should allow the guest to make the selection. Don't undersell, try upselling, If the receptionist is a good salesman and is able to highlight features and facilities he would always be able to make a higher sales, while up selling be careful that you are not pushing the guest towards a higher rate because if the guest gets a feeling that he has been cheated then although the hotel might get the higher sale but he will not get the repeat business.

- **Selling during rush hours**

Usually hotels have a set pattern of arrivals load for e.g. in case of an airport hotel the load of the guest usually is in the night and there is heavy load of arrivals during night period. The selling ability and skills of a receptionist to an unannounced guest are put to test in such rush hours. His patience with the guest and how calmly and efficient, he is able to deal with such guest is of great importance. In order to be able to attend to unannounced guest efficiently the hotel may open a new and extra arrival registration counters for the heavy check-ins.

- **An undecided guest**

This category guest provides an excellent opportunity to the receptionist to up sell the room. When such a guest arrives without any pre notice it will be easy for the receptionist to convenience him to buy a higher priced room. For such a guest the receptionist should first try to find out why is he in the city. This could provide him lead for promoting certain types of accommodation. Offer the guest a variety of room explaining the features and merits of them. Always promote a higher rate accommodation first, as it is easier to back down rather than to try selling up.

HOSPITALITY DESK-

A hotel provides hospitality desk manned by their experienced staff.

- i. Helps the guest with any information he wants
- ii. Provide any help he needs during his stay.
- iii. Serves as a private information Centre
- iv. Personal concierge to its guest by providing firsthand knowledge of what to do and where to go.
- v. Provide tour information, brochures and maps for guests to have self-guided experience.

GUEST HISTORY

This is a record which is made for all VIPs and regular guests. This is a record of all the guests who have stayed in the hotel. The purpose of guest history is to remember the frequent guests needs, desires, likes, dislikes, and provide them even before the guest asks for them. This information is collected by the hotel staff before, during and after the stay of the guest. The guest history needs to be updated after every guest visit. The guest history card collects the information such as guest name, address, nationality, important dates, guest likes and dislikes, no. of visits, duration of stay. Room no. and rate, contact no. of booking person, and guest comments. The guest history information is used for giving:-

- a) Incentives
- b) Personal attention
- c) Recognition

COMPLAINT HANDLING

When guests are not satisfied with some services and express their discontent to hotel employees most often to front desk staff their grievances are recorded as guest complaints. When guests find it easy to express their opinions to the staff both the hotel and the guest benefit. The hotel gets a feedback about its staff and services and can take corrective actions, while guest can have a comfortable stay if his problems are addressed.

Types of Guest Complaints:-

The guest complaints can be grouped into four major categories. They are:-

- a) **Mechanical Complaints-** These are related to malfunctioning or non- functioning of systems and equipment's installed in guest rooms like television not working, mini bar not cooling, air conditioner not working, problem in channeled music, hot water not coming etc.
- b) **Attitudinal Complaint-** When a guest feels insulted by rude or tactless hotel staff and lodges a complaint it is referred to as attitudinal complaint. A guest may also make attitudinal complaints when hotel staff bothers him with their problems.
- c) **Service related Complaints-** They are about the problems in services provided by the hotel like delay in room service of lunch, room not cleaned, delay in clearance of soiled food tray, luggage not picked up after many calls also etc.

- d) **Unusual Complaints**- They are those over which hotel does not have any control. For example- Hotel does not have a swimming pool, hotel does not have a golf course etc.

Handling guest complaints:-

The front office should handle guest complaints tactfully, exercising patience, empathy and decision making skills. As hospitality industry is a service oriented industry the hotel staff should always try to resolve the customer's problems immediately and thus appease him. If a front office agent is unable to handle a guest complaint, she should call her senior before the situation goes out of control or becomes worse.

The complaint is actually a opportunity which the guest is giving to the hotel to improve the services or products. Rather it is bad if guest has a complaint but does not inform it to the hotel as guest will have the anger carried with him and as because his problem is not solved he might not come back to the same hotel because of his dissatisfaction.

The guest can have a complaint at any stage of the guest cycle like Reservation problems like proper information was not taken, the car did not arrive at airport etc. During arrival there can be complaints like guest was not greeted and welcome properly, guest booked a certain category of room but when allotting rooms he got a different category of room or he wanted a sea facing room but he was not given, bell boy did not explain the facilities of the room correctly etc. There can be complaints during the stay like room was not cleaned, guest wanted to book a car for sight-seeing but car arrived late and during departure like there is a wrong posting in the bill, bell boy did not come for luggage pick after continuous calls also etc.

The following guidelines can be followed while handling guest complaints:-

Using the simple five step LEARN model ensures that they are followed:-

- **Listen** carefully to your customer. Don't interrupt or tell the customer to calm down, just let them pour out the anger and dissatisfaction. Never argue as guest is always right. Never try to win an argument- you may win the argument but lose the guest forever.
- **Empathize** – Try to get an understanding of what is the difficulty which has caused for your customer. Show concern and take complaints seriously. Do repeat back, word for word, the last part of their sentence. Create empathy with “it sounds like...”If possible isolate the guest so that other guests might not overhear.
- **Apologize** to the customer, even if you feel that you have no part in the problem. “I'm sorry that you have experienced xyz...”. Do not attribute any responsibility to the customer.
- **React** – Decide what you will do to resolve the problem, and tell this to the guest. Offer choices and never make a false promise.
- **Now!** – Do not delay. Take immediate action! Monitor the corrective measures if any taken. Follow up and inform guest about the solution. If unable to resolve the problem then call your senior. The longer you keep the guest waiting, the harder it will be to produce outstanding customer service.

In the hotel industry, service standards are very important. The services should be of exemplary standard so as to ensure guest satisfaction and delight. This would lead to repeat business and positive word of mouth publicity

GUEST HANDLING

In Hotels, you come across all types of guests. Your job is to serve them all equally well. Guests are different; each is unique and different from others. Your job is to make them happy with good service, smile and something more, that is courtesy and make sure they are coming back, Most of the guests essentially want the same thing that is to be given importance. They like to be treated as welcomed guests, not as intruders. They also like to be treated equal and respected.

If guests are looking only for speed in service, machines would have replaced humans. But they want something more from human beings that is smile, friendly attitude and also courtesy.

Our prime objective is to satisfy our guest's need, both physical and psychological. It is not a difficult task to satisfy our guest, provided we render services which we are supposed to render. As we discussed above, we receive various kinds of guests and we need to satisfy them. To handle them we need to understand their nature and behavioral patterns.

Guests are categorized under two categories

1. **Normal Guests** - are those guests who understand logic and it is easy to deal with and make them happy.
2. **Awkward Guests**-are those guests who do not understand logic. So we need to be diplomatic while handling them.

Let us discuss how to deal with few common types of awkward guest. They are as follows:

Handling of awkward guests:-

I) Fussy Guests-These are the guests who go on complaining and grumbling without telling their specific demands. Try to pick up what they want. Ask them questions for which they have to answer "Yes" or no.

II) Guests with Language Barrier

If a foreigner guest who cannot speak English or the local language, and you do not understand his language, is seeking for some service, there could be a problem. Try to get a person who can speak his language, e.g. the Tour Leader, in case of groups. If this is not possible, try to understand his signals.

III) Ignorant Guests

These are the guests who are not aware of the rules. For example, they can say, "Why do you need my passport details? Explain briefly and to the point, e.g. "In India legislation requires passport details."

IV) Chatterbox

These are the guests who can take lot of your time. Be polite, considerate and courteous; do not be rude. Listen or appear to be listening. Look for a short break, make a short comment

and say, "Excuse me sir, I will be back in moment and move off. If one of your colleagues can give you a call on telephone, this will be ideal solution.

V)"Break the rule for me" type Guests

These are the guests, who ask for favors which you are not allowed to do. For example, a guest asking for a drink on a dry day or after the bar is closed. Be brief and do not argue. Only say "sorry, I cannot do this sir" and "we are allowed to do this, sir."

Vi)Angry guest:

Apologize immediately for the specific inconvenience caused only. Do not try to give explanations and reasons. If you go on explaining, the guest will become angrier. Act immediately and do what he want or need. Do not argue. Logic does not work when one is angry.

vii) Snob Guests

These are people, who show off and try to act smart. They speak highly about their contacts. Ignore the show off but in such a way that the guest is not ignored.

viii) Impatient Guests

Deal with such guests as you would deal with an angry guest.

ix) Socializer

These are the men, who try to invite the female staff members like Receptionists, Hostesses, etc. out. In these cases, do not act offended, angry or surprised. Humor eliminates the problem easily. Say, for example, "I can go out provided my family can come along" or say "Sorry, I have a date with my fiancé". If easing out this sort of situation is impossible, be firm but polite. Tell him politely that you will call the manager. If he continues, call the manager, whose appearance will put him in place.

x) Timid Guest

These are the type of guests who never complain. If unsatisfied, they will simply not come back to the hotel. This is most important that such guests do not go unsatisfied. Ask them about their stay, comfort and services. Watch for signs of displeasure like frowns, sighs, finger tapping, etc. Speak to him and draw out his feelings.

xi) Drunk Guest

I stage: There is simple excitement handle him like a chatterbox. Logic is acceptable.

II Stage: Takes away control on emotions. The person becomes sad, depressed and angry very easily. Deal him like angry and impatient guest.

III Stage: Highly under influence of alcohol, movements are affected. Logic does not work. Try to draw his attention. Use your tact.

IV Stage: Totally paralyzed. He cannot control his limbs. He should be tactfully sent to his room or a taxi to be called for him and escorted.

A guest in drunken state may disturb or trouble other guests and could be a cause of embarrassment for the hotel. To avoid problems, the hotel staff should politely remove the drunken guest from hotel lobby at the earliest and escort him to an isolated place like the back office. If guests act in an unruly manner the hotel security must be called.