

# Housekeeping



## Training outcome :

- Describe the role of the housekeeping department in hotel operations, and explain the importance of effective communication between housekeeping, the front office and the engineering and maintenance division.
- Identify typical cleaning responsibilities of the housekeeping department, and explain performance standards and productivity standards are used to plan and organize the housekeeping department.
- Understand the managerial skills necessary to efficiently operate an on premises laundry operation (OPL).



## Module 1: Guest Room Preparation

# Housekeeping –

## Definition, Role and Responsibilities

### Definition of Housekeeping

Housekeeping may be defined as 'provision of a clean, comfortable, safe and aesthetically appealing environment'. By another definition, 'housekeeping is an operational department in a hotel, which is responsible for cleanliness, maintenance, aesthetic upkeep of rooms, public areas, back areas and the surroundings'.

The term Housekeeping outside the hospitality, hospitals refers to the management of daily duties and chores involved in the running of a household, such as cleaning, cooking, home maintenance, shopping, and bill payment etc. These daily recurring tasks may be performed by any members of the household, or by other persons like butler or maids who are hired for the purpose.

# Role of Housekeeping

Housekeeping department in hotel ensures the cleanliness, maintenance, and aesthetic appeal of all rooms and public areas. The housekeeping department not only turnarounds (prepares and clean guestrooms) on a timely manner it also cleans and maintains everything in the hotel so that the property is as fresh and attractive similar to the day when it opened the doors for the business.

The effort that the housekeeping makes in giving a guest a desirable room has a direct bearing on the guest's experience in a hotel. There are more employees working in the housekeeping department when compared to any other hotel departments.

Being responsible for the turnaround of the rooms in a timely manner, housekeeping primary communications are with the front desk/reception team. Each room status is updated on a regular basis from the housekeeping to the front desk and vice versa. With new technologies available a room status update can be done via the hotel software, telephone systems, housekeeping mobile applications etc.

Housekeeping also coordinates closely with the maintenance or engineering department, as the housekeeping staff identifies different types of maintenance issues while cleaning the rooms and reports to the maintenance team for rectification or replacement. Example snags or issue with the TV, AC, Heating unit, Plumbing, Lighting, Electrical faults, Furniture, Toilet, Vanity, Tub, Towels racks, Ventilation issues etc.

The role of housekeeping can change depending upon the type or category of the hotel, for example only in a luxury or full-service hotel evening or turndown services are offered by the housekeeping department. The housekeeping department is one of the major '**Support Centre**' in the hotel as it doesn't generate any major revenue for the hotel.

Housekeeping is considered as a '**back of the house**' department even though they have some direct contact to the guests; like for example while cleaning rooms, picking up laundry, providing evening or turndown services etc.

# Main Responsibilities of Housekeeping

- To ensure well furnished and maintained guestrooms and public areas.
- To ensure excellence in housekeeping sanitation, safety, comfort and aesthetics for hotel guests.
- To oversee the coordination of and administer all housekeeping programs and projects.
- To act as a source of contact in interdepartmental communications, vendors, professional agencies etc.
- To act provide a budget, budget control, and forecasting related to housekeeping.
- To achieve the maximum efficiency in ensuring the care and comfort of guests & in the smooth functioning of the department.
- To establish a welcoming atmosphere.
- To ensure courteousness, reliable service from all staff to the guest.
- To ensure a high standard of cleanliness and general upkeep in all areas for which the department is responsible.
- To provide linen in rooms, restaurants, banquet halls, conference halls, health clubs etc, as well as to maintain an inventory for the same.
- To provide uniforms for all the staff & maintain inventory for the same.
- To cater to the laundering requirements of hotel linen, staff uniforms, and guests.
- To provide & maintain the floral decorations and to maintain the landscaped areas of the hotel.
- To select the right contractors & ensure the quality of work is maintained.
- To co-ordinate renovation and refurnishing of the property in consultation with the management & with interior designers.
- To co-ordinate with the purchasing department for the procurement of guest supplies, cleaning agents, equipment, fabrics, carpets, & other items used in the hotel.
- To deal with lost & found articles.
- Carpet shampooing and maintaining.
- Dealing with any guest queries, complaints & requests as they occur.
- To keep the general manager or administrator informed of all matters requiring attention.

# Service & Delivery housekeeping requests

A) Locate and deliver required items to guest room

## Introduction

In most cases, it will be the responsibility of housekeeping to carry out any guest requests that they receive.

This is generally fairly easy to do because most requests relate to items that the room attendant has ready access to - guest supplies are on the housekeeping trolley and most other things requested are either in a Floor Housekeeping storeroom or can be „borrowed“ from a vacant room.

In other cases, however, some requests may involve a bit more time and effort.

## “It's not my job!”

No staff member should ever use the phrase „It's not my job“ when responding to a request from a guest.

In a service industry, it is always your job to assist guests.

If the request is outside your normal work responsibility, you should:

- Record and confirm the request
- Pass the details on to the relevant person for them to action.
- Never, ever tell a guest “You'll have to ring the Maintenance department - we don't handle replacing light globes” or “Sorry, Room Service do that - perhaps if you ring 22 someone there can help you”.

## Action is the key to responding to a request

Once a request is received, you must promptly seek out the item or equipment necessary to complete the request within the agreed timeframe.

The key to any request from a guest is to take action on their request.

To do this, you will most likely just go to your trolley (or to the nearest housekeeping storeroom), grab what is needed and take it to the guest room.

## Passing on requests

In other cases, where the request falls outside your ability to fulfil it, the appropriate person must be notified and the request passed on important points when doing this are:

- Pass on all the relevant details including the name and room number of the guest is vital. This information allows the person to get back in contact with the guest to clarify things or amend the promised delivery time
- Make sure the person you give the message to understands it. Get them to repeat it back to confirm it. Make special mention of any important bits including the need for urgency.
- Stress any agreed time that have been given. If you promised the item in 10 minutes, you must let the other person know when that 10 minutes is up.

## Requests for information

It is sometimes more time consuming to provide certain things to guests. Requests for information are amongst these.

Requests for information can cover:

- Information on the products and services offered by the establishment - even though guests have an in-room compendium they can still want more detail than what is there and there is always the possibility that this information is out-of-date.
- Use your product knowledge about the property to answer these questions, and where you don't know the answer, apologies, tell them you will find out the answer and get back to them, then do so.
- Availability of services, hours, location of meals, services and equipment - you might be able to inform a guest that there is an ice machine at the end of the corridor but perhaps you don't know when the spa opens or what the treatments are how much they cost.

- How various types of equipment works - you are expected to know how to operate all the in-room facilities (this should be one of the first things you are trained in as part of your on-the-job training) but guests may ask you about other items of equipment throughout the property that you know nothing about. This is to be expected if you are the first person they see as they walk back to where they are from not being able to operate a piece of gym equipment, not being able to get the vending machine to work.
- Requests for information about local services, attractions, transport, shopping, entertainment, bars, places to eat. While is probably more a reception or concierge role, once again, guests can ask you because „you are there“.

In these situations:

- Never say “I don’t know” and leave it at that
- Never tell them it’s not your job to provide that sort of information
- Never tell them to look it up in their in-room information compendium.

Never give them the impression that asking for the information is an imposition or a stupid thing for them to do.

## B) Services and items available through the housekeeping department

### Introduction

Many guests will have direct requests and are clear as to what housekeeping can provide. For some guests however this may be the first time in a hotel and are unsure what is available for use in the room.

It is your role to provide assistance and information that may be suitable to their needs. At times the guest may not directly tell you their need to be aware of signs that may indicate their requirements.

### Items or services that may be required

The guest may require any of the following directly related to the housekeeping department:

- Additional equipment in their room
- Fold-away bed - usually stored in the housekeeping department, this bed is portable and already made up
- Additional bedding
- Extra blankets - where these are requested it is a good idea to advise the guest that an extra blanket is provided in the wardrobe just in case they don't know this
- Extra pillows - as above
- Extra towels
- Hand towels
- Face washers
- Bath towels
- Floor mats
- Improvement in the servicing of room
- Room to be re-vacuumed
- Area to be re-cleaned
- Bed to be remade
- Items in compendium
- Extra stationery - determine what is needed and how many
- Bathroom supplies
- Extra shampoo
- Extra soap
- Extra shower caps
- Items for beverage making
- Extra tea, coffee, sugar and milk sachets
- Extra crockery or cutlery
- Repair or removal of broken equipment
- Electrical water jug / kettle
- Hair dryer
- Toaster
- Iron and ironing board
- Light bulb changed
- Air conditioning/heating system fixed
- Instructions on how to work equipment
- Instructions on how to work entertainment equipment
- Instructions on how to work heating system
- Instructions on operating the in-room safe.



## Advising on hotel services and items

It is quite common for guests to ask you questions whilst you are in the room handling a separate request. As you are face to face with the guest, they may use this opportunity to ask you questions relating to the products and services provided in the hotel.

As the "face of the business" it is your role to:

- Provide information directly
- Arrange for someone more suitable to come in person to provide information
- Follow up a request including dinner reservations
- Arrange copies of information sought including maps, brochures, menus or contact information.

For most guests, they are new to the hotel and as a professional staff member you should be equipped to provide guests with advice, information or suggestions to help make their stay more enjoyable.