



| EBOOK

Hotel Standard Operating Procedures: **Front Office/Reception**



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Intro

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are common tools used by businesses to ensure consistency and excellence.

In the hotel and hospitality industry, creating and maintaining high-quality SOPs is imperative. These documents prevent accidents, increase staff efficiency and effectiveness, and improve the guest experience.

SOPs are step-by-step instructions for an activity or process in the workplace. Day or night, the beginning of a shift or the end of a shift, good quality SOPs ensure every guest receives the same level of service and care.

Creating a set of SOPs for each department can be easier said than done, especially when you're stretched for time. So, whether you're starting from scratch or updating your SOPs, we've created this guide for you. In each section, you'll find multiple checklists to work from.



Want to go back to basics?








Read our complete guide to standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Etiquette, manners, and presentation








Your front office/reception staff may be the first in-person contact guests have with your hotel. As such, the way your staff interact with and present themselves impacts the guest experience. But etiquette, manners, and presentation go further than a friendly smile and an ironed uniform.

A positive, friendly, knowledgeable attitude is essential for front office/reception staff. While some staff members may feel that the following checklist may be strict, incorporating these steps into your SOPs will lead to satisfying guest-staff interactions.

Basic etiquette and manners

-  Greet guests with a smile in an upbeat, positive manner.
-  Use the guest's name when addressing them.
-  Maintain eye contact during the interaction.
-  Maintain good posture; keep your back straight and don't lean on counters or walls.
-  Listen attentively and empathetically to the guests' requests and concerns.
-  Use polite language and avoid slang. Offensive language is forbidden.
-  Keep the front office/reception tidy at all times.

Grooming and hygiene

-  Ensure that your shoes are polished and clean before duty.
-  Brush your hair and groom your facial hair before duty.
-  Uniforms must be clean, pressed, and free from superficial damage such as split seams or tears.
-  Staff members may wear perfume, but ensure that it is subtle.
-  Your nails must be clean and trimmed.
-  Shower daily and use deodorant.
-  Brush teeth twice a day and maintain good dental health.



Reservations

Reservations are one of the most important jobs for hotel front office/reception staff. Reservations can come in the form of a phone call, email, online travel agency (OTA) booking, or walk-in, for example. When they are handled well, they contribute toward the financial success of your property, increase customer satisfaction, and improve operational efficiency.



Manage all your bookings from one central system with Planet PMS

Walk-in and phone call reservations

- ▶ If it's a phone call, answer within three rings. Greet the guest warmly and ask how you can assist them.
- ▶ Listen to the guest. Ask for name, stay date, number of guests etc.,
- ▶ Check for availability in your property management system (PMS).
- ▶ Tell the guest about the available rooms for the requested dates.
- ▶ Tell the guest about other services or amenities offered such as complimentary breakfast or spa access.
- ▶ Create a new reservation in your PMS, including any extra services they have requested.
- ▶ Repeat the reservation details to the guest.
- ▶ Ask for credit card details and other contact information, then disclose your cancellation and deposit policy.
- ▶ Send a confirmation email.
- ▶ Thank the guest and ask if you help them in any other way.

Email reservations

- ▶ Read the email and check for availability in your PMS on the requested dates.
- ▶ Reply promptly, thanking the guest for their enquiry. Alternatively, you may call them back.
- ▶ Tell the guest about the available rooms for the requested dates.
- ▶ Tell the guest about other services or amenities offered such as complimentary breakfast or spa access.
- ▶ Disclose your cancellation and deposit policy.
- ▶ Ask for necessary details such as name, country, and contact number.
- ▶ Thank the guest for their enquiry.
- ▶ Upon reply, create a new reservation in the PMS and send a confirmation email.
- ▶ If you haven't heard back from the guest within two days, send a follow-up email to ask if the guest would still like to make a reservation.
- ▶ Thank the guest again and ask if you can assist with anything else.



Guest registration and check-in

When guests arrive at your hotel, they are likely to have had a tiring journey. A smooth, friendly, and efficient check-in process is the best way to get your guest's stay off to a good start. It's also important for front office/reception staff to collect guest information, process transactions safely, and take advantage of upsell opportunities.

Check-in basics

- ▶ Greet the guest by name if possible.
- ▶ If the name is not known, ask guests to confirm their first and last names.
- ▶ Search for the guest's reservation record on your property management system (PMS).
- ▶ Print the registration card and ask the guest to confirm their details and sign.
- ▶ Ask for the guest's passport, ID, and Visa (if needed), photocopy them, and hand them back.
- ▶ Confirm the guest's preferences (room type, bed type, floor location), and offer an upgrade if possible. Make note of any special requests.
- ▶ If the guest wishes to settle payment upon check-in, take payment safely and securely, following protocol.
- ▶ Make a keycard, place it into a cardboard wallet, write their room number on it, and hand it over to the guest.
- ▶ Inform the guest about all relevant details such as breakfast times, Wi-Fi, checkout, concierge, and facilities.
- ▶ Wish the guest a wonderful stay and direct them to their room, or introduce them to the concierge who will escort them.

Concierge luggage handling upon check-in

- ▶ As soon as guests arrive, offer assistance with their luggage and confirm the number of pieces.
- ▶ Confirm the guest's surname and write it down on the luggage tag.
- ▶ Inspect the luggage for damage and bring it to the guest's attention.
- ▶ Place the luggage on the trolley and group the pieces together.
- ▶ Push the trolley to reception and wait for the guest to register.
- ▶ Find out the guest's room number and escort them to their room with their luggage.
- ▶ Set their luggage down in the desired place, remove luggage tags and take them down to reception for recording purposes.
- ▶ Should the room not be ready, place the luggage in the store room on the "arrival" shelf.

Credit card handling

- ▶ Ask for the guest to present their credit card.
- ▶ Check signature. Does it match the signature on the registration card? If it doesn't match, it cannot be accepted.
- ▶ Check for any signs of alteration. If it looks tampered with, it cannot be accepted.
- ▶ Check the expiry date. Do not accept it if it's out of date.
- ▶ Use your electronic payment terminal to take payment. Print receipt, initial, and file.
- ▶ Keep a note of all credit card charges, daily, and ensure compliance by ensuring the right procedure has been taken.



Integrate payments into your property management system (PMS) to save time and money, and reduce errors and fraud.



Shift changes

The success of any hotel front office/reception lies in how well staff hand over their shifts to one another. A high-quality SOP can ensure your staff get up to speed quickly, work well together, and are aware of events, incidents, and other vital information from the previous shifts.



The quality of a shift handover can impact the quality of the following shift, so it must be done well.

Coming to the end of a shift

1. Create a transaction report from your PMS. It must state how much money should be in the cash box, any money that was taken for deposits, and how much was paid for by credit card.
2. Count the money.
3. Check that the amount taken by credit card matches the total from the electronic payment terminal. Should there be any discrepancies, find the mistake.
4. Pass on all necessary information and urgent tasks to the arriving member of staff.

Arriving at your shift

1. Report to work at the correct time.
2. Ensure you are dressed and groomed to an acceptable standard.
3. Check notice boards in the back office.
4. Attend briefing and take handover from the previous shift.
5. Read the log book and get up to speed on all events or incidents.
6. Prepare all necessary documents for the shift ahead.





Guest checkout

As a last point of contact for your guest, the checkout experience should be helpful, efficient, and friendly. An effective checkout could even increase the likelihood of customer loyalty and an online review. Whether you offer express/contactless checkout or opt for the traditional checkout method, ensure that guests feel taken care of every step of the way.

Check out procedure

- ▶ Greet the guest and ask if they are ready to checkout.
- ▶ Ask how their stay was. Whether their feedback is positive or negative, make a note and share it with management later.
- ▶ Ask if the guest needs a transfer to their next destination.
- ▶ Look for the guest's reservation in your PMS and check their pending balance.
- ▶ Print out the reservation folio, show it to the guest and ask if any charges are missing.
- ▶ Inform the guest of how much balance remains, and ask how they would like to pay.
- ▶ Collect the payment and mark the guest as "Checked out" in the PMS.
- ▶ If the guest has already vacated their room, ask for the keycard. If they are yet to vacate, ask them to drop the keycard back upon departure.
- ▶ Ask if the guest needs any assistance with their luggage.
- ▶ Thank the guest and say goodbye. Invite them to stay again.



Guest requests

When your front office/reception staff are efficient and knowledgeable, guest requests should be simple. Handling requests well improves the guest experience by ensuring that they have the best stay possible.

Car transfer service

- ▶ Handle car/taxi transfer requests in a friendly manner and attempt to accommodate the guest.
- ▶ Make a note of the pick-up date and time, place, destination, and the number of passengers.
- ▶ Confirm that pick-up is available at the time requested.
- ▶ Should pick-up not be available, offer for a later/earlier pick-up.
- ▶ Record the request and inform the guest of the cost. Add the fee to the reservation folio.
- ▶ Send a confirmation email to the guest.
- ▶ Forward the reservation to the driver.

Recommendations

- ▶ Always be proactive. Ask guests if they would like recommendations when checking in or throughout their stay.
- ▶ Should a guest ask for a recommendation for a restaurant or sightseeing experience, assist them in a friendly manner.
- ▶ Take into account the type of guest (family, business traveler, etc.) requesting the recommendation and tailor your response with this in mind.
- ▶ Your first recommendation should be the services that the hotel provides (restaurants, bars, guided tours, trips, etc.).
- ▶ When recommending places outside the hotel, show them the location on a map and offer directions.
- ▶ Offer to make a booking on their behalf.

Room moves

- ▶ Listen to the guest's request.
- ▶ Ask the reason/s for the move and be apologetic should the reason be negative. Offer to solve the problem immediately.
- ▶ Offer them multiple alternatives. Use this opportunity to upsell a room upgrade. Offer to show the room to the guest before making a choice.
- ▶ Attempt to allocate the new room as close to the old one to make the change easier.
- ▶ Should there be no similar rooms available, upgrade the guest to a better room (after seeking approval from your manager).
- ▶ Depending on the severity of the issue, offer a complimentary item (bottle of wine, meal, discounts, etc.)
- ▶ Send a team member with the new keycard to move the guest. They should check the room to ensure nothing was left. Report minibar consumption.
- ▶ Make the changes in your PMS.
- ▶ Document the changes and inform the housekeeping department of the change.
- ▶ Take all steps necessary to resolve the issue with the initial room.
- ▶ Give the guest a follow-up call later in the day to ask if the new room is to their liking.



Find out how Planet helps you spend less time worrying about day-to-day hotel operations.



About Planet



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We combine software, payments and technology to help our customers deliver consistent, convenient and personalised experiences, which meet the changing demands of their own consumers.

Our single end-to-end platform allows retailers to support unified shopper journeys across all channels, including complex processes, such as click and collect, shop and ship, and advanced return management.

For hoteliers, we offer integrated and built-in payments that power digital guest journeys, saving them time and enabling them to generate revenue through integrated value-added services. protel Cloud PMS by Planet (formerly protel Air PMS) was created over 10 years ago with a new user interface rebuilt in 2020. It is intuitive and simple to use with a straightforward workflow that is easy to learn and teach.

We also work with a network of Financial Services Partners around the world to provide global payment processing solutions.