

## *Guest Cycle and Rooms Reservation*

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#### 1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :

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- Summarise front office operations during four stages of the guest cycle
- Describe front office record keeping and documentation during different stages of the cycle
- Discuss the sales dimension of reservations
- Describe and demonstrate different types of bookings
- Demonstrate reservation inquiries and their distributing channels

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#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION :

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All the job roles, activities and areas of the front office are geared toward supporting guest transactions and services. To many guests, the front office is the hotel. This unit examines front office operations in terms of the various stages of a guest's stay, referred to as the guest cycle. All room reservation activities

for guests should result in having a hotel room ready and waiting when the guest arrives. This section describes typical activities associated with the reservations process.

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## **1.2 GUEST CYCLE :**

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Financial transactions a guest makes while staying at a hotel determine the flow of business through the property. Conventionally, the flow of business can be divided into a four-stage guest cycle.

Front office employee should be aware of the guest services and guest accounting activities at all stages of the guest stay. Front Office employees can effectively serve guest needs when they clearly understand the flow of business through the hotel.

### **1.2.1 Pre-Arrival :**

The reservation office in the hotel is the sales office for the hotel's non-group business. The employees of the reservation department should be sales-oriented and present a positive, healthy image of the hotel. A reservation agent should be able to respond to the rooms request and any other query very quickly. A reservation confirmation letter is sent as a record for the guest. The appropriate handling of reservation data can be critical to the success of a lodging property. If the procedures are followed, then the agent can record adequate data and will be able to promote hotel services.

Reservation is a stage where the guest makes up the mind to which hotel he wants to book for his next travel. Many factors influence a guest to book a hotel.

Travel Management Companies (Travel Agent)
Ease of making the reservation (reservation agent, in person, e-mail, website etc.)
Employees description of hotel, facilities and room
Internet
Recommendations from friends or business associates
Quality of service
Overall cleanliness and appearance
Chain or Brand Loyalty
Price / Discounts / Special offers
Purpose of travel
There are preconceptions based on hotels name or chain affiliation.

Reservation agent creates an electronic reservation record by accepting the matching room request. The creation of history initiates the hotel guest cycle. The history of the guest starts the hotel guest cycle. This record enables the hotels to personalise guest services and appropriately schedule the necessary staff and facilities.

Using the information collected during the reservation process, a PMS (Property Management System), initiates pre-registration. Pre-registration function includes automatically assigning a specific room and rate to guests who have not yet registered and creating an electronic guest folio.

An automated reservation system helps maximise room sales by accurately monitoring room availabilities and forecasting rooms revenue. However, no doubt, the most critical outcome of the reservation is to have the rooms available and ready when the guest reaches.

### 1.2.2 Arrival :

The arrival phase of the guest cycle comprises registration and rooming functions. After the guest arrives, he or she begins a business and legal association with the hotel through the front office. The front office staff has to explain the nature of the guest–hotel relationship and to display the financial transactions between the hotel and its guests.

Entrance is the first–place guests directly interact with hotel staff. Attentive uniformed staff is a feature of many upscale and world–class hotels that help the guest in a welcoming, baggage handling, car parking and various other services. Excellent welcome at the entrance helps create a great first impression. There are multiple staffs like – Doormen, Valets, Bell attendants to help with various such tasks. The mid–scale and economy service hotels might employ a small number of people to give a similar kind of service.

There are four stages of the arrival process. Welcome, Registration, Escorting and Rooming. The front desk attendant should determine the guest’s reservation position before beginning the registration process. Guests with a reservation may have already undergone pre–registration activities. Those without, known as “walk–ins”, present an opportunity for front desk agents to sell guestrooms. To be successful at sales, a front desk attendant must be very familiar with the hotel’s room types, tariffs and guest services and be able to describe them positively.

Registration data contains information about the guest’s intended method of payment, planned length of stay, any special needs such as roll away bed or child’s carrycot, guest’s billing address, e–mail address and telephone number. All this information is recorded in the registration card.

Gathering all relevant information in detail at the time of reservation and registration enhances the front office’s ability to satisfy special guest needs. Also aids in forecast room occupancies, and settle guest account properly. At check out, this registration record becomes the primary source of guest history record.

Once the registration record is created, the attention is now on a method of payment. A proper credit establishment should be done in the beginning to ensure smooth payment and hassle–free departure for the guest. The guests use cash, check, credit card, debit card, travel agent voucher, company billing letter. The front office must ensure eventual payment.

The front desk should know the room types on offer. Hotel room types may range from a standard single room to a luxurious suite. Table 2 defines some typical hotel room types. Furnishings, amenities, and location within the properties will differentiate the room rates within the same room types.

Once the registration is complete, the method of payment is established, the guest is allotted a room key and permitted to proceed to the room. When the guest arrives at the office, the occupancy stage of the guest cycle begins.

## Front Office Management

### ❑ Check Your Progress – 1 :

1. The guest chooses hotel during the \_\_\_\_\_ phase of the guest cycle.  
(A) departure (B) occupancy (C) pre-Arrival (D) arrival
2. Proper handling of \_\_\_\_\_ information is critical for the lodging establishment's success.  
(A) revenue (B) guest preference  
(C) reservation (D) food preference
3. \_\_\_\_\_ influences travellers in booking a hotel room.  
(A) Internet (B) Food (C) Beverage (D) Weather
4. Front desk attendants should check a guest's \_\_\_\_\_ status before check-in.  
(A) age (B) nationality (C) reservation (D) marital
5. A proper \_\_\_\_\_ should be established for a smooth payment process at the departure.  
(A) debit (B) credit (C) charge (D) allowance

### 1.2.2 Occupancy Stage :

This stage is when the guest uses the services that the hotel has to offer. The hotel must represent itself in the best possible manner. Front desk plays a pivotal role at this stage. Its primary job is to coordinate with all departments of the hotel so that the guest gets the best possible service and enjoys excellent experiences. The front office should respond to the request in a timely and accurate way to maximise guest satisfaction. A concierge may also be on staff to provide exceptional guest services.

A primary front office objective is to boost repeat visits. Good guest relationships are essential to this objective. Guest relationships depend on clear, constructive communication between front office, other hotel departments and the guest. The hotel should be aware of the guest complaints and should be able to resolve it with a satisfactory resolution.

Another critical aspect of occupancy is security. Security issues likely to apply to front office include verifying guest identity and other information and protecting guest funds and valuables.

Various financial transactions happen during the stay of the guest, and a property management software helps with these. Different transactions are posted during the guest stay. Room rate and tax is the single most substantial charge on the guest folio. Other expenses that are posted on the guest account are services and goods purchased from different outlets of the hotel. Hotels have to establish acceptable credit at the time of arrival. This amount is referred to as the house limit. Guest account has to be continuously monitored to ensure that the house limit is not exceeded.

Front desk accounting records must be continuously reviewed for accuracy and completeness through system audit. The audit can be programmed to run at a particular time of day. The night is the best time as there are least transactions during that time due to inactivity.

### **1.2.3 Departure :**

Guest services and guest accounting aspects of the guest cycle are complete during the cycle's fourth phase : departure. The final element of the guest accounting process that is the settlement of the account happens during this stage. At check out, guests vacate the room, turns in the room key. He receives the correct statement of his account (Folio). After check out the front office has to update the guest room status correctly and close the account.

Departure is the last opportunity to interact with the guest, which makes the stage crucial. During check out, the guest feedback may be taken about his/her stay at the hotel. Guest feedback may be sought during interactions at different stages of occupancy and departure on a feedback form. Feedback helps the hotel understand the guest better. It also helps the manager understand the trend or any shortcomings that the hotel is facing.

A guest history file is an assembly of guest history records. Most hotels use the registration record to create guest history file automatically. Guest history helps management understand the guest better and creates a solid base for strategic marketing.

Settlement of account is the process of collecting the money and finally closing the statement at the time of departure. Depending on the guest, he/she may use a credit card, debit card, cash, travel agent voucher or company billing letter to settle the account of the guest. Accuracy of the bill should be achieved before the departure. Problems may occur, and charges are posted into the guest account until after the guest checks out. These charges are called late charges. Late charges can lead to hotel incurring an extra expense in the recovery of charges. Additionally, it may lead to an angry guest due to faulty departure service.

After departure, the front office can analyse data regarding the guest stay. Property Management System (PMS) can provide reports that identify and isolate problem areas of the hotel's services. The management can then take necessary action to tackle the issue. PMS also gives an idea of the trends that a hotel has to deal with.

#### **□ Check Your Progress – 2 :**

1. Which of the following is a chief front office worry during the occupancy stage of the guest cycle ?  
(A) security  
(B) account settlement  
(C) room assignment  
(D) maintaining the guest history record
2. Uniformed service functions are main activities in which of the following stages of the guest cycle ?  
(A) pre-arrival and arrival                      (B) arrival and occupancy  
(C) occupancy and departure                      (D) arrival and departure
3. Which of the following front office histories typically contains personal guest data, the length of stay, and the method of settlement ?  
(A) room rack slip                                      (B) registration card  
(C) information rack slip                                      (D) credit card voucher

4. Charges that are posted after the guest departure are called \_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) Post charges (B) Late charges  
(C) Early charges (D) Paid out charges
5. \_\_\_\_\_ helps the hotel understand the guest better.
- (A) Complaint (B) PMS (C) Feedback (D) Crying

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### **1.3 ROOMS RESERVATION :**

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**Reservation** – Reservation in the hotel industry is defined as ‘blocking a specific type of guest room (e.g., single room, double room, deluxe room, executive room and suite.), for a fixed time (i.e., number of days of stay), for a specific guest, at a particular rate of room/package’.

The most important outcome of the reservation is to have a guest room ready on arrival for the guest. The room is not just any room but the room that best meets the needs the guest expressed during the reservation process. A well-organised reservation system allows hotels to ensure a steady flow of guest into their properties. Easy access to a hotel’s data bank of rooms helps in fulfilling the guest's needs as well as in reaching a targeted daily occupancy rate, average daily rate, yield percentage, and Rev-PAR. A reservation system signifies the primary means of producing positive cash flow and a favourable income statement.

Duties related to rooms reservation have been more complex and essential. Many hotels have established the position of Revenue Manager to oversee them. A revenue manager is responsible for forecasting demand. For each market segment the hotel as well as determining the guest room rates that will provide sufficient room revenues and occupancies.

❖ **Typical Reservation Actions :**

- Formulating the reservation inquiry
- Determining room and rate availability
- Creating the reservation record
- Confirming the reservation record
- Maintaining the reservation record
- Producing reservation reports
- Researching, planning, and monitoring reservations

#### **1.3.1 Types of Reservation :**

**Tentative** – The hotel holds the room for the guest till a cut-off date, by which the guest should confirm the reservation.

**Confirmed** – Once a guest confirms a reservation request, the hotel blocks a room for specified stay dates. It sends a written confirmation of the same to the guest.

**Guaranteed** – The hotel will hold a room for the guest and not issue it to any other guest even if he/she does not arrive on time. This time may be the check-out time of the following day or any additional time the hotel selects. The guest, in turn, promises to pay for the room, even if it is not used, unless the reservation is not cancelled according to the hotel’s cancellation policies and procedures.

### **1.3.2 Types of Guarantees :**

**Prepayment** – Prepayment requires that payment in full be received before the guest's day of arrival at the hotel. From the viewpoint of the front office, this is generally the most desirable form of guaranteed reservation. This type of guaranteed booking is commonly used at the resort.

**Advance Deposit** – Requires that the guest pay to hotel an individual (not all) amount of money. For example, a one-night deposit, 50% of the total package value. Usually, this advance deposit amount is non-refundable and is taken if the guest cancels or fails to arrive at the hotel. If the guest arrives, this deposit is credited to the folio on the last day of the departure.

**Payment Card** – Credit and debit card companies have arrangements with lodging companies. In case of no-shows and cancellations, the participating hotels get the money in case of payment card guarantee method.

**Voucher** – A type of travel agent guarantee is the travel agency voucher. The travel agent issues the voucher. The guest has prepaid the amount to the travel agent. Agent forwards voucher to the hotel as proof of payment. A guarantee prepaid amount will be sent to a hotel when the voucher is returned to the hotel. Usually, with the coupon, the travel agency deducts its commission before sending payment to the hotel.

**Corporate Guarantee** – In corporate guarantee, a company/corporation agrees to accept financial responsibility for any no-show business travellers that the corporate sponsors.

**Non-Guaranteed** – The hotel agrees to hold the reservation until the cancellation date/time (4 P.M. or 6 P.M. hold). Beyond the cancellation time, the hotel will release the room back to the inventory and will be free to sell it. The hotel does not get any money in case of cancellation or no-show.

**Waitlisted** – When the requested category of room is not available for the requested dates.

### **1.3.3 Sources of Reservation :**

**Direct** – Hotels directly handle many of their reservation transactions. Depending upon the volume of calls received, the hotel may have a person or a separate department to process the reservation work. Guest can reach the hotel directly in several ways – telephone, e-mail, property website and property to property. Most hotels have specific sales procedures for reservation agents to use when taking reservation from a caller. Standard components of the reservation agents sales process include :

Booking is a sales process. One more important quality of a successful reservation office is that the agents are trained to sell the hotel instead of being merely order-takers. They create a positive image of the property and instil a desire on the part of the caller to make a reservation. A positive reservation agent will be able to create a positive image of the hotel and will be able to get more bookings.

To create a reservation, record the reservation agent should have some necessary data.

- Guest's name (and group name, if applicable), Guest's home or billing address, Guest's e-mail address
- Guest's telephone number, including area code.

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- Name, address and telephone number of the guest's company, if appropriate.
- Name of and pertinent information about the person making the reservation, if not the guest
- The number of persons and their ages if there are children.
- Arrival date and time
- Departure date and time
- Reservation type
- Special requirements
- Additional information needed (method of transportation, late arrival, flight number, room preference, and so out.)
- After receiving this information confirmation number to provided by the reservation agent, which is a unique reference number for the reservation record. In case of a guaranteed reservation, additional information required would be :
  - Payment card information
  - Prepayment or deposit information
  - Corporate or travel agency account information – letter or a voucher

Reservations should inform the essential aspects of guaranteeing a reservation. Guests should know the deposit amount, the cut-off time before they could guarantee. Guest must also know that if they fail to cancel the reservation.

**Central Reservation System** – A majority of the lodging properties belong to one or more central reservation system. A CRS is responsible for maintaining a room availability inventory for each property participating in the order. There are two types of central reservation systems.

**Affiliated Reservation Network** – A hotel chain reservation network in which all participating properties are contractually related. Chain hotels link their reservations operations to streamline the processing of reservations and reduce overall costs. Another intended outcome is that one chain property will attract business for (or refer business) another chain property. Tickets are passed on from one hotel to another hotel through automated reservation network.

**Non-Affiliate Network** – is a subscription system designed to connect independent or non-chain hotels. Non-affiliate reservation networks enable independent hotel operators to enjoy many of the same CRS benefits as chain-affiliated operators.

**Travel Agencies** – Travel agencies act as intermediaries for hotels. They are private retailers that provide travel and tourism-related services to the general public on behalf of suppliers. Smaller hotels, such as a boutique hotel, often find it cheaper to offer commissions to travel agents than engage in direct advertising and distribution campaigns.

**Intersell Agency** – An intersell agency is a reservations system alternative to a Global Distribution System (GDS) that contracts to handle reservations for more than one product line. Intersell agencies typically take reservation services for airline companies, car rental companies, and lodging properties – a “one-stop-shop” approach.

**Global Distribution System (GDS)** – GDS is a giant computer grid. It is also a reservation tool that passes hotel catalogue and rates to travel agents and

allows them to make reservations. GDS is used by various travel sections and serves many different establishments, including airlines, ground handlers, hotels, railways, car rental companies, airports, cruise lines and ferry operators. The property's information (rates, inventory, etc.) are loaded into both the GDS and ODD (Online Distribution Database), which connects hundreds of internet travel portals and Online Travel Agencies (OTA). The leading GDS Systems are Amadeus, Galileo/Apollo (owned by Travelport), Sabre, and Worldspan (owned by Travelport)

**Cluster Reservation Office** – Chains that have several hotels across the globe may opt to have a single reservation office (cluster office) for a particular geographical location. This office or website operates similar to chain CRS but serves one specific area.

#### **1.3.4 Reservation Reports :**

**Reservation transaction report** : This report summarises the daily activities of a reservation department. **Commission agent report** : This report includes the amounts payable by the hotel to the various commission agents.

**Turn away or refusal report** : At times, hotels end up 'turning away' guests due to unavailability of rooms. This report records such cases. **Revenue forecast report** : It is a forecast of the business volume a hotel expects to generate in a specified time.

**Expected arrival list** : This list has names and room types of guests who are expected to arrive the next day.

**Stayover list** : This list has names and room numbers of guest who are expected to continue to occupy their rooms the following day.

**Expected departure list** : This list has names and room numbers of guests who are expected to depart the next day.

#### **□ Check Your Progress – 3 :**

1. Mr Jariwala made a reservation at The Orchid Hotel. He arrived at 9 P.M. only to find that the hotel was full. The room held for him was released for sale at 6 P.M. Based on this information, which of the following types of reservations did Mr Jariwala probably make ?
  - (A) a non-guaranteed reservation
  - (B) a credit card guaranteed reservation
  - (C) travel agent guaranteed reservation
  - (D) corporately guaranteed reservation
2. Central reservations offices typically exchange room availability information with member properties and communicate reservation transactions :
  - (A) Weekly
  - (B) Daily
  - (C) Hourly
  - (D) As they occur
3. Which of the following reservation system reports would help managers assess the volume of reservations activity daily ?
  - (A) an expected arrivals and departures report
  - (B) a rooms availability report
  - (C) a regret and denial report
  - (D) a reservations transaction report

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4. Which of the following front office applications would help managers track commissions payable to agents for booking business at their hotels ?  
(A) reservations module (B) rooms management module  
(C) guest accounting module (D) financial management module
5. A term used to classify lost business when potential guests choose not to make a reservation.  
(A) denial (B) regret (C) turn away (D) no show

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### 1.4 LET US SUM UP :

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Financial transactions that occur due to guest activity while staying at the hotel regulates the guest cycle of a business. Flow can be divided into four stages – Pre–Arrival, Arrival, Occupancy and Departure. The Guest chooses his hotel in the pre–arrival step. The arrival stage includes registration and rooming function. During the occupancy stage, the front office provides the guest with services, information and supplies. Other services and accounting activities are completed during the departure. Since activities and functions tend to overlap between stages, some hotels have revised traditional guest cycle into sequence of pre–sale, point–of–sale and post–sale events.

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### 1.5 ANSWERS FOR CHECK YOUR PROGRESS :

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- Check Your Progress 1 :**  
1. (C), 2. (C), 3. (A), 4. (C), 5. (B)
- Check Your Progress 1 :**  
1. (A), 2. (D), 3. (B), 4. (B), 5. (C)
- Check Your Progress 1 :**  
1. (A), 2. (D), 3. (D), 4. (A), 5. (C)

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### 1.6 GLOSSARY :

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**Guest cycle** – A division of the flow of business through a hotel that identifies the contact and financial exchanges between guests or guestrooms.

**Guest folio** – A paper or electronic form that the front desk staff uses to chart transactions on an account assigned to a person or guestroom.

**Guest history file** – A collection of guest history records containing information about interactions between a hotel and former guests.

**Late charge** – a transaction is requiring posting to a guest account that does not reach the front office system until after the guest has checked out.

**Property management system** – A computer software package that supports a variety of applications related to the front office and back–office activities.

**Reservation Record** – An electronic document storing such guest data as the date of arrival, type and number of rooms requested, deposit, and several persons in the party.

**Advance–deposit guaranteed reservation** – a type of guaranteed booking that requires the guest to pay a specific amount of money to the hotel in advance of arrival.

**Affiliate reservation network** – a hotel chain’s reservation system in which all participating properties are contractually related.

**Central reservation system** – A network for communicating reservation in which each participating hotel is represented on an automated database and is required to provide room availability data to the central reservations central reservation.

**Global Distribution System** – A distribution channel for reservations that provide worldwide distribution of hotel reservation information and allows the selling of hotel reservation around the world; usually accomplished by connecting the hotel company reservations system.

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## **1.7 ASSIGNMENT :**

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You are a reservation agent of Hotel ABC. While attending a reservation call from Ms Chandni, you found that she has a query regarding whether she should guarantee her booking.

Briefly explain about the benefits of guaranteed booking.

Explain the different modes of payments for guaranteed reservations.

Practice filling reservation forms by choosing a partner who acts as a guest for booking a room.

Practice telephone etiquettes and telephone booking with a partner who acts as a guest for booking a room.

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## **1.8 ACTIVITY :**

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Suggested Guest Speaker

The reservations manager from a local hotel with a computerised reservation system to discuss the relationship between reservations and sales :

- How the property trains reservations agents in sales techniques
- How reservations agents use sales techniques to enhance total revenue
- The impact such a sales emphasis has on the bottom line

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## **1.9 CASE STUDY :**

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“Testing the New Reservations Agent”

Ravi, the general manager of The President Hotel, has a habit of test-calling his hotel's reservation department to hear how the hotel is sold over the telephone. The hotel recently hired a new reservations agent, Anita, and he would like to know how she sells the hotel. Since he has met her only twice (once when she was hired and once in the employee cafeteria), he is confident she will not recognise his voice.

Ravi calls the hotel's main telephone number and asks for the reservations department. After two rings, Anita answers the telephone, and the following conversation takes place :

Anita : "The President Hotel reservations. This is Anita. How can I help ?"

Ravi : “I am looking for a reservation for next Tuesday. Are any rooms available ?”

Anita : “What kind of room are you looking for ?”

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Ravi : "I have never been to the hotel. What kind do you have ?"

Anita : "We have standard rooms and deluxe rooms."

Ravi : "What is the difference ?"

Anita : "One thousand rupees per night."

Ravi : "No, I mean, what makes one standard and the other deluxe ?"

Anita : "Our standard rooms are on the lower floors of the hotel. The deluxe rooms are on higher floors." (A five-second pause occurs at this point.)

Ravi : "Well, thanks for helping me." (Ravi hangs up.)

### **❖ Discussion Questions :**

1. Did Anita properly sell the hotel and its features ? What could she have done to sell Ravi on the reservation ?
2. What elements should be included in Anita's training to prepare her to answer reservation telephone calls correctly ?
3. Should Anita handle a request for a group guestroom differently from a non-group room ? If so, what are the differences ?
4. Describe several ways of communicating room availability and rates to Anita in the reservations office. How can Anita use this information in her sales efforts ?

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### **1.10 FURTHER READING :**

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1. Hotel Front Office : Operations and Management – 9th edition – Jatashankar Tiwari
2. Professional Front Office Management – 2nd edition – Robert H Woods, Jack Ninemier, David K Hayes.



**UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 2.0 Learning Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Pre-Registration
- 2.3 Registration
  - 2.3.1 Registration Records
  - 2.3.2 Registration Process
- 2.4 Check-In Procedures
  - 2.4.1 Check-In Procedure in Manual / Semi-Automated Hotels
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Answers for Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Glossary
- 2.8 Assignment
- 2.9 Activities
- 2.10 Case Study
- 2.11 Further Reading

**2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :**

- Explain activities associated with the second stage of the guest cycle, i.e. arrival – pre-registration and registration
- Describe the various pre-registration activities, including preparing the arrival list, room availability status and amenities voucher
- Illustrate formats for the registration record
- Trace the flow of registration process – identifying guest status, completing registration records, assigning rooms and rates, establishing the payment modes, and issuing room keys.
- Compare the check-in procedures for manual, semi-automated and fully automated hotels.

**2.1 INTRODUCTION :**

The first stage of the guest cycle deals with reservations. The second stage deals with arrival – deals with the activities involved in the process of pre-registration and registration—the registration process, which involves the formalisation of a valid contract between a guest and hotel.

**2.2 PRE-REGISTRATION :**

1. Activities carried out by front desk attendants before the arrival of guests, which help quicken the process of guest registration are termed as pre-registration activities.

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2. Arrival list is prepared for the next day with rooms availability.
3. Room position is calculated.
2. Any unique request/amenities requested are reconfirmed/communicated with other departments.
5. Then the amenities vouchers are prepared for the arriving guests, which are sent to the respective departments like housekeeping and food and beverage service department.
6. The front office attendant checks the status of the room to make sure that the rooms are ready to move in. This coordination must be done with the housekeeping.
7. The front desk attendant next prepares Guest Registration Card (GRC). The information in the GRC is pre-filled. The information is sourced out from guest history record and reservation record.
8. Pre-filled GRC allows quick check-in when guests arrive at the registration desk, as they only need to verify the information already entered in the GRC and sign the card.
9. The check-in of a walk-in guest takes comparatively longer as it is not supported by pre-registration activity.
10. Pre-registration also includes room and rate assignment.

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### 2.3 REGISTRATION :

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1. The registration process is completed in the reception. This area is operated by a desk attendant (receptionist) who welcomes the guest and answers their inquiries. Registration is the first face-to-face communication between the hotel and the guests.
2. Registration is a process of gathering information from the guest that is mandatory as per law prevailing in the country. According to the Foreigner's act, 1946 and Registration of Foreigners' Rule, 1992, the hotels should keep records of the guest staying in his sites as perform F (of the Registration of Foreigners' Rules, 1992).
3. Registration is the formalisation of a valid contract between the guest and a hotel. The hotel offers safe and secure boarding, and lodging facilities and the guest accepts to pay for the facilities received.
2. In the case of non-Indian visitors, the front desk staff should fill Form C.
5. The form C details have to be sent to FRRO (Foreigners Regional Registration Office) and LIU (Local intelligence office) within 24 hours of the arrival of the guest.
6. In the case of Pakistani and Bangladeshi guest, this information should reach within 4 hrs of arrival. Additionally, local police station should also be informed.



There are different types of passport and applicable visas for India. Scan the QR codes for more information on types of Passports and types of visas for India.



**Fig. 1 : Types of Passports**

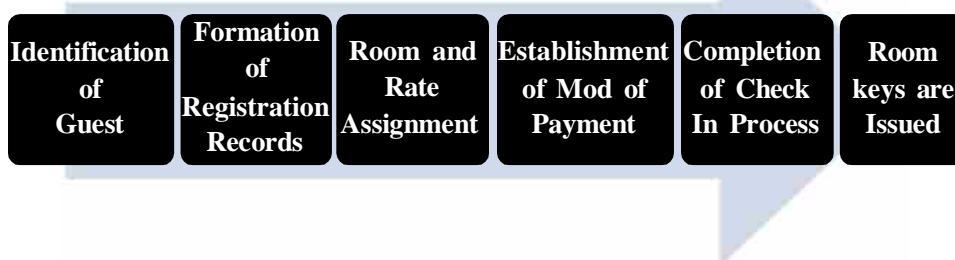
**Fig. 2 : Types of Visas**

### 2.3.1 Registration Records :

The information collected during the registration is stored as the registration record, which is based on form F of the Registration of Foreigners' Rule, 1992. Hotels have different ways of posting and storing registration records.

- **Hard Bound Register** – Normally used by small hotels. All the pages are bound into a thick book, and it can be used for a long time.
- **Loose-leaf Register** – It contains the same data as hardbound register, with the difference that the pages are not bound. One new page is used every day.
- **Guest Registration Card** – GRCs may be used in duplicate or triplicate as per hotel requirement. They are given at the time of arrival to complete registration formality.

### 2.3.2 Registration Process :



**Identification of Guest** – Identify the guest and distinguish between a booked or a walk-in guest. Pre-filled GRC due to pre-registration activity makes the guest have a speedy check-in. Walk-in guests must go through a few extra steps before they are ushered to the room.

**Formation of Registration record** – A guest fills/verifies registration record and signs it. The complete registration record is a legal requirement. It legalises the relationship between the guest and the hotel. Registration card helps create other records such as folio, guest history card and other required documentation.

**Room and Rate Assignment** – A room is assigned to the guest after the signature of the guest registration card. Room is given as per booking details or the preference of the guest. Guest preferences like floor level, view type, smoking/non-smoking and elevator proximity are taken into consideration.

**Establishment of Mode of Payment** – The determination of guest credit and mode of payment is essential for a hotel. Hotels accept cash, traveller's cheques, foreign currency, credit card as valid modes of payment. Also, travel agent voucher and authorised bill to company letter are some other modes of payment. A voucher, letter or advance deposit is asked at the beginning of the stay to secure the payment for the guest stay.

**Completion of Check-in Procedure and Issuance of Room keys** – After the registration, a room is assigned to the guest. A bell attendant is called to escort the guest and his/her luggage to the assigned room. The front desk attendant carries out the following activities after the guest leaves for the room.

- Creates folio
- Fills form C
- Updates room status

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## **2.4 CHECK-IN PROCEDURES :**

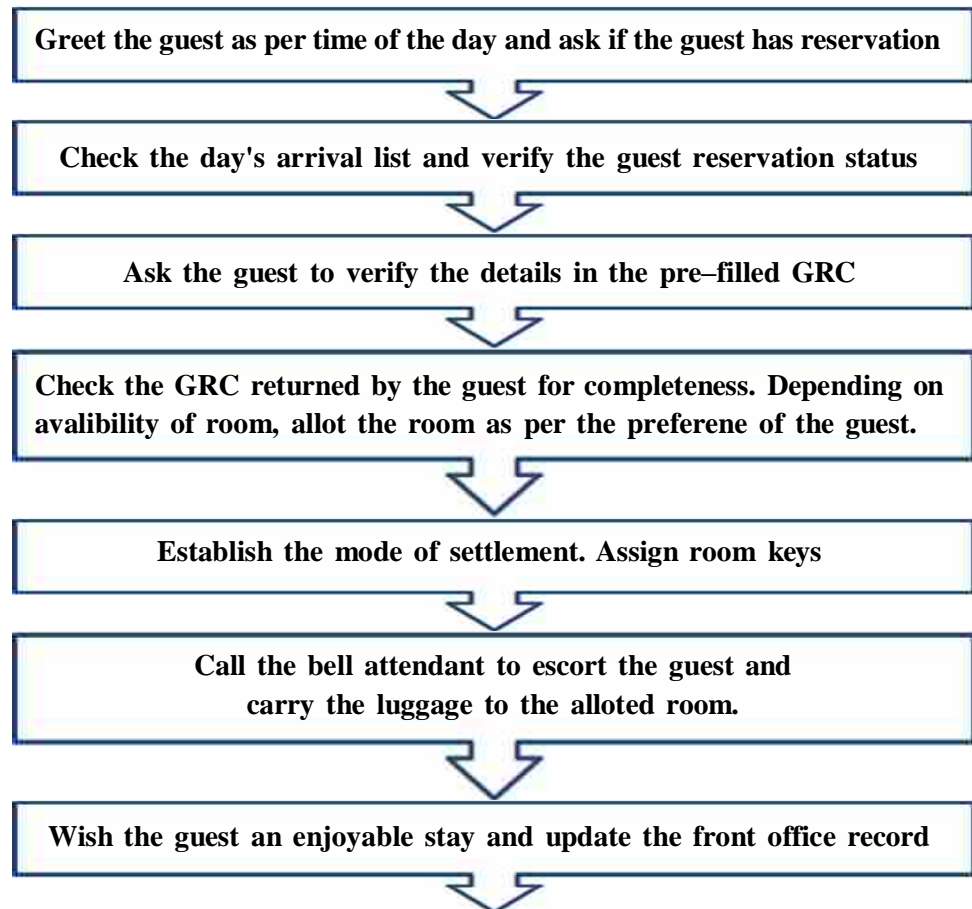
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Check-in procedure involves different stages of the arrival of a guest to the issuance of the room key to the guest. In case of manual or semi-automated operations systems, the process begins as the guests arrive at the hotel are greeted by the front office staff. Then they complete registration formalities. Finally, a room is assigned, the key is issued, and the guest is escorted to the room.

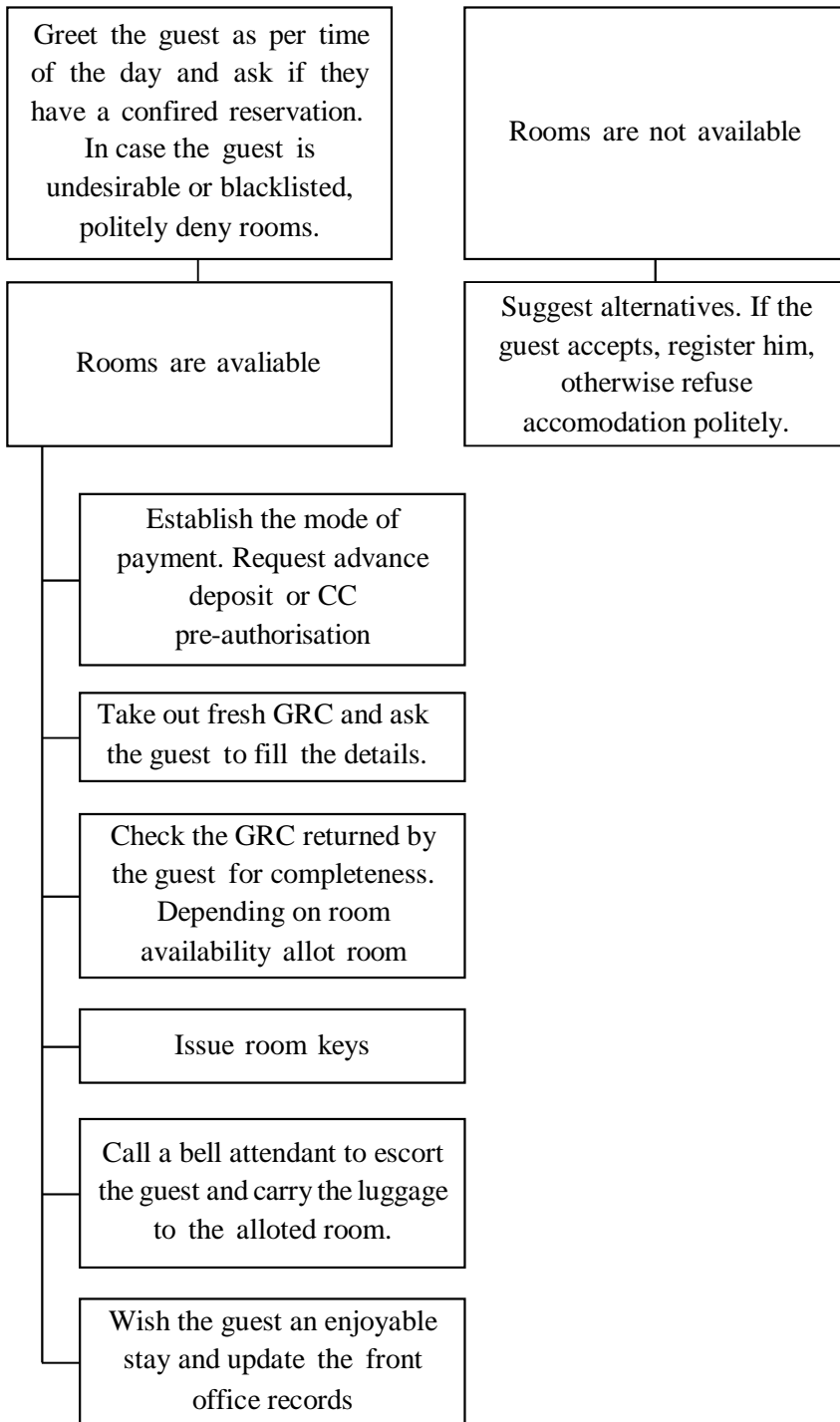
### **2.4.1 Check-In Procedure in Manual / Semi-Automated Hotels :**

The check-in varies for the guest with a confirmed reservation and walk-in guests. It may take a specialised form in case of VIPs, groups, crews and scanty baggage guests.

#### **❖ Guest with Confirmed Reservation :**



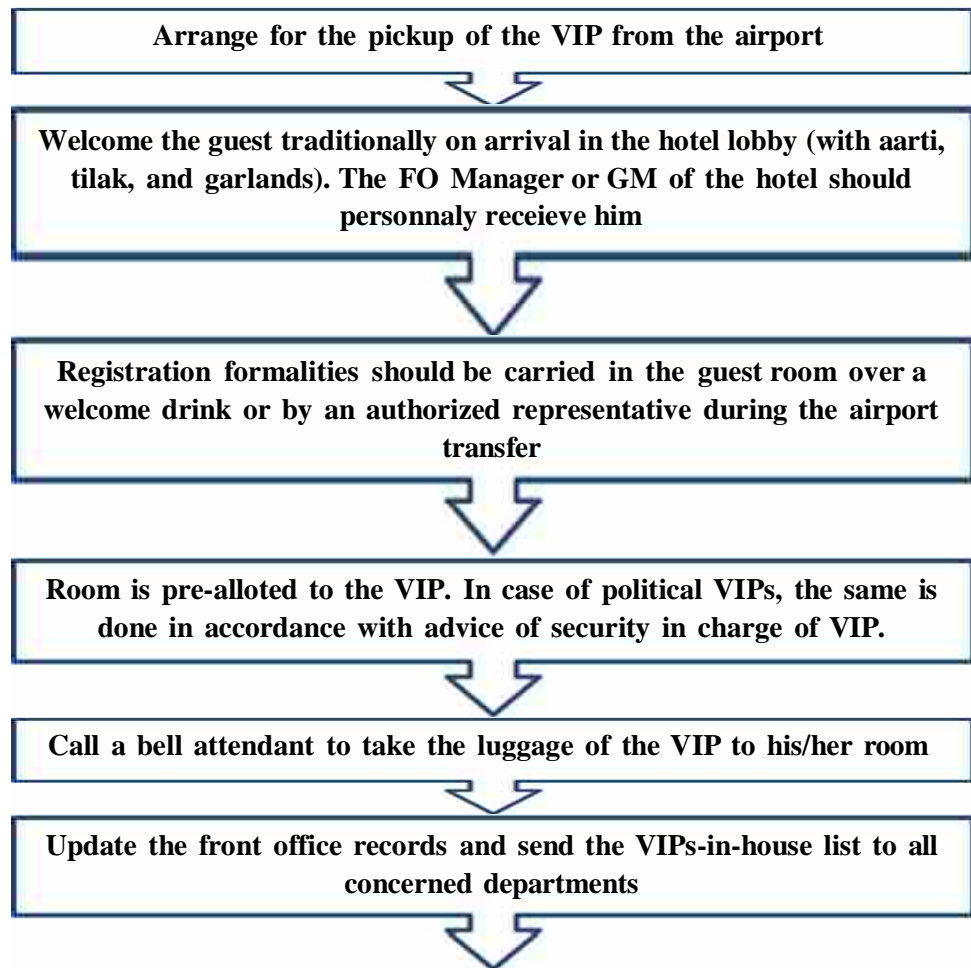
❖ **Walk-in Guests :**



❖ **VIP Guests :**

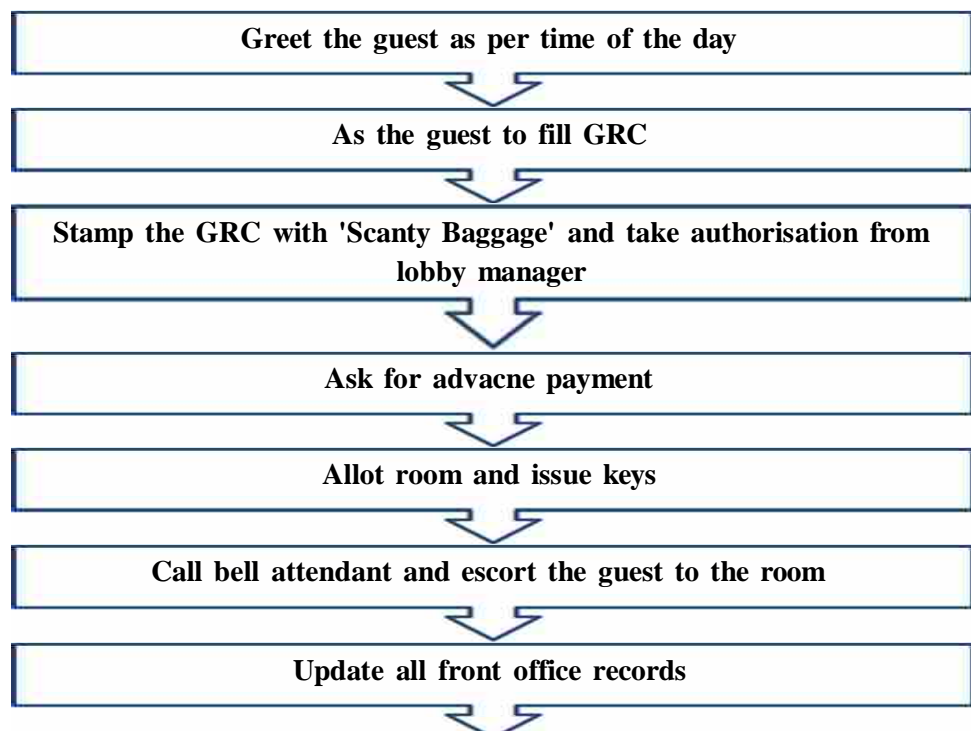
Very Important guests include heads of state, ministers, senior media personnel, sports personnel, film stars, rock stars, travel writers, top executives of corporate houses. CEOs of large corporate house, senior defence personnel, famous public figures and others. They guest special treatment and attention. They guest special treatment and attention from the hotel staff due to their VIP status.

**Front Office Management**



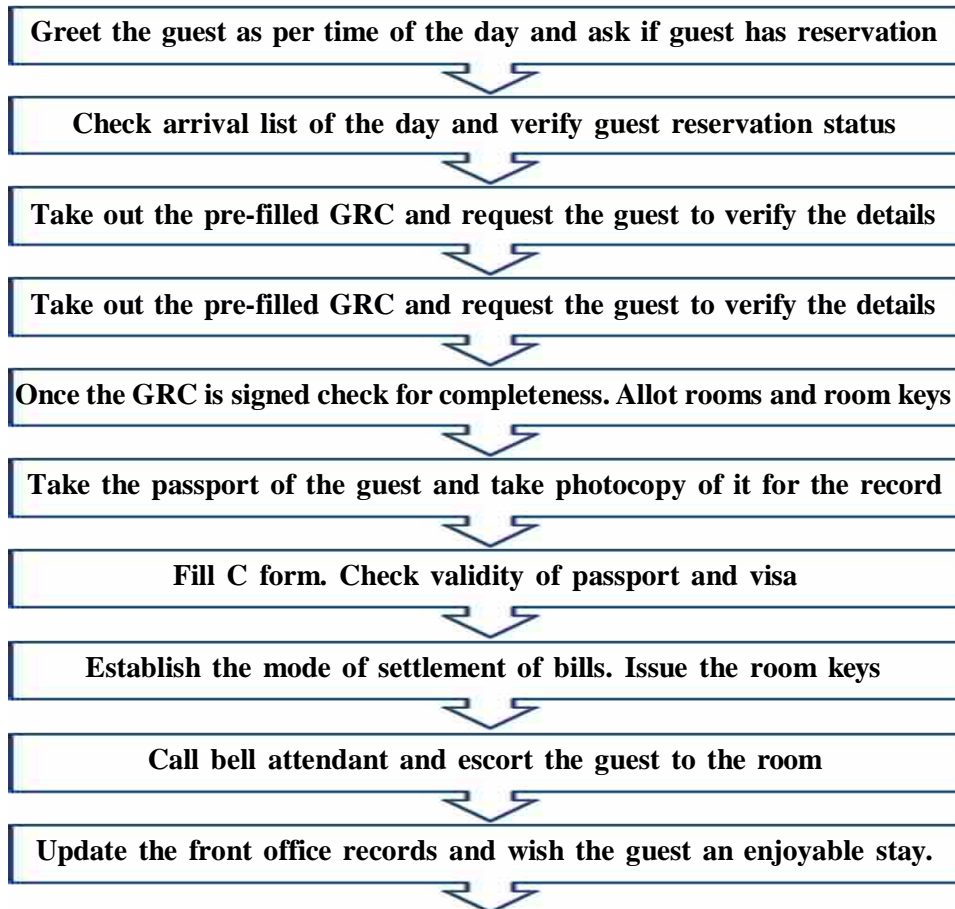
❖ **Scanty Baggage Guests :**

A guest who arrives at the front desk requesting accommodation and is carrying very little or no baggage is called a scanty baggage guest. Such a guest is a potential skipper (a guest who leaves without paying bills). Following guest needs to be flagged, and following check-in, the procedure needs to be done for them.



❖ **Foreign Guests :**

Check-in for foreign guests is the same as a domestic guest, with the exception that Form C has to be filled for registering a foreigner guest. Diplomats and NRIs do not have to fill this form. The hotel staff should check the guest's passport and visa.



❖ **Check-in Procedure in Fully Automated Hotels :**

In fully automated hotels, guests can register themselves at self-check-in kiosks without the intervention of hotel employees.

To know how it works, please scan the following QR code to see a video.

By installing self-service terminals, hotels reduce the waiting time for check-in and thus offer a superior customer service experience to the guest. The self-check-in terminal gives hotel staff more opportunity to look after other hospitality needs of guests.



**Fig. 3 Self Check-In Kiosk by Resorts World Genting (Resorts World Genting 2015)**

❑ **Check Your Progress – 1 :**

1. Data for pre-filling of guest registration card is obtained from :

- (A) Reservation form
- (B) Guest history card
- (C) Both
- (D) None of the above

## Front Office Management

2. In which of the following conditions can a hotel refuse accommodation to walk-in guests even though the number of vacant rooms is available
  - (A) Guests are disorderly dressed
  - (B) Guests are in a drunken state
  - (C) Guests are suffering from contagious disease
  - (D) All the above
3. Indian government issues the following types of passport.
  - (A) Ordinary (B) Official (C) Diplomatic (D) All the above.
2. The non-immigrant visa may be of the following type :
  - (A) Student visa (B) Tourist visa (C) Work visa (D) All the above.
5. After every check-in, front desk carries out which of the following activities.
  - (A) Updating room status
  - (B) Creating guest folios
  - (C) Preparing arrival notification slip
  - (D) All the above.
6. The hotel register is also known as the red book.
  - (A) True (B) False
7. Form F requires the necessary data to be taken from every hotel guest.
  - (A) True (B) False
8. The check-in procedure of walk-in guests differs from the check-in procedure of guests with a confirmed reservation.
  - (A) True (B) False

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### 2.5 LET US SUM UP :

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In this chapter, we have studied the second stage of the guest cycle, i.e. arrival. The activities carried out before the guest arrival – that ensure the speedy check-in of the guest – are termed as pre-registration activities. That includes preparation of arrival list, the printing of GRC, availability status, amenities voucher and few others. The registration of a guest at the front desk involves legal implications for both the hotel and the guest. It is mandatory by law to maintain the registration record of their guest. Registration involves identification of guest reservation status, the formation of folio and basis for guest history record.

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### 2.6 ANSWERS FOR CHECK YOUR PROGRESS :

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□ **Check Your Progress 1 :**

1. (A), 2. (D), 3. (D), 4. (D), 5. (D), 6. (A), 7. (A), 8. (A)

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### 2.7 GLOSSARY :

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**Arrival List** – A list generated by the reservation section, which contains the data of the guests expected to arrive on a given day.

**Form C** – A document that contains the information required to be sent to FRRO / LIU in case of foreign guests.

**Form F** – A document that contains the information required to be maintained by the innkeeper for all visitors arriving in the hotel.

**Guest History Card** – A form that contains the data of the guests frequently visiting the property. This document helps in pre-registration, sales, and marketing activities, and for planning guest services.

**Hardbound register** – A thick, bound book containing the registration records of a hotel.

**Loose-leaf register** – The pages of this book, containing the registration records of a hotel, are not bound, and one new page is used every day.

**Passport** – A political paper identifying the holder as a resident of the country granting it, and is by nature of a request to other countries for his free passage there.

**Reservation form** – A form used to gather the data required for the reservation of a specific guest.

**Rooming List** – A list prepared for the groups and crews, containing the names of group members.

**Scanty baggage guest** – A guest who arrives at a hotel without luggage, or only with a briefcase or a handbag.

**Visa** – Visa is an endorsement on the passport, allowing the holder entry into the territory of the issuing country.

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## **2.8 ASSIGNMENT :**

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List the details contained in the reservation form, guest history card that is used to fill GRC as part of the pre-arrival activity.

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## **2.9 ACTIVITY :**

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Visit a hotel in your city and collect all the forms and format used during the check-in procedure. Do a mock check-in with a partner who can act as a guest.

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## **2.10 CASE STUDY :**

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Raghu is a receptionist in The Deltin Hotel. One day a guest comes at the front desk and asks about the availability of a room for three nights. There are fifteen rooms available for the requested duration. However, while talking with the guest, Raghu notices that he is drunk although his behaviour is decent. What should Raghu do in this situation ?

### **❖ Discussion Questions :**

1. Should he register the guest for the requested duration ? Why or why not ?
2. Should he deny accommodation to the guest ? Why or why not ?
3. Suggest alternatives to Raghu, along with reasons.

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## **2.11 FURTHER READING :**

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1. Managing Front Office Operations – 10e – Michael L. Kasavana
2. Professional Front Office Management – 2e – Robert H. Woods et al

**UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 3.0 Learning Objectives**
- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 Functions of Night Audit**
  - 3.2.1 Purpose of Night Audit**
- 3.3 Role of Night Auditor**
- 3.4 Trial Balance/ Accounts Receivable**
- 3.5 Posting of Room Charges**
- 3.6 Distributing Charges**
- 3.7 Audit Procedure Credit**
- 3.8 Other Duties of Night Auditor**
  - Check Your Progress 1**
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up**
- 3.10 Answers For Check Your Progress**
- 3.11 Glossary**
- 3.12 Assignment**
- 3.13 Activities**
- 3.14 Case Study**
- 3.15 Further Reading**

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**3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :**

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In this unit, we have discussed the procedure for night auditing in detail and the various steps involved in the same.

After going over this unit, you should be able to :

- Describe the role of night auditor
- State functions of the night audit
- Discuss the distribution of charges

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**3.1 INTRODUCTION :**

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The hotel during daytime is full of activities. Many transactions take place at various points in the hotel. It is during the night time that the day's sales are tabulated and at the same time cross-checked. The night is a quieter period for the front office staff with the least amount of guest interaction. This task is performed at the front office by the night auditor. He is, in fact, a person who acts as an internal auditor for the whole day's financial transactions.

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### 3.2 FUNCTIONS OF NIGHT AUDIT :

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Night audit is the audit process of taking account of the day's work. In other words, it is the action of checking and confirming that whatever transactions have been done through the day is correct and complete. Any errors made during the day of transaction posting can be rectified during this time. Accounts such as rooms, food and beverages, taxes, phones and others are amended, and each account is balanced. Since the hotel business is a round-the-clock business, in hotels, the auditing is done during the night, and later it is called night auditing. In hotels functioning manually and mechanically, the best-suited time for the process is midnight as the activities are minimum during this time. In hotels operating on the computer, i.e. fully programmed system, the audit and posting can be done without upsetting the night auditing process. Hence the work of auditing can be done at any time. This work in an automatic system is mainly creating and distribution of reports, called 'Early Bird' or 'Flash' information about the previous day.

#### 3.2.1 Purpose of Night Audit :

The purpose of night auditing is mainly to inform the management about the total amount of revenue generated. How much the hotel is owned by the guests, both in-house and checked-out and producing operational and management reports. The 'Early Bird' or 'Flash' reports help the accounting department to compile a more extensive daily report for posting to the general ledger. An effective night audit increases the probability of correct account settlement and avoids disputes with the checking-out guest. It verifies you posted entries to non-guest accounts. Night audit monitors guest credit limits, balance all front office accounts and sorts out any room status discrepancies.

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### 3.3 ROLE OF NIGHT AUDITOR :

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The primary function of night auditor is the responsibility of overall operations of the hotel as per the policy and procedure laid down, closing and balancing of the front office accounts recoverable. An auditor can handle 200–250 rooms typically; while with a computer, even a more massive hotel may be managed by him.

#### ❖ Job Description of a Night Auditor :

1. Receive and record guests' payments.
2. Prepare a list of those accounts, which are above a specific amount/limit.
3. Make a list of walk-in guests during the day as per the policy.
4. File reports and keeping them updated.
5. Ensure all statements and vouchers on the hotel's checklist are on the general manager's table for review and approval.
3. Prepare the ageing report for city ledger and 'Hold Bucket' on every 15th.
7. Handle all internal control items concerning company policy and procedure.
8. Ensure that the hotel receives payment for goods and services sold to the guest.

Broadly the functions of an auditor include cross-checking every revenue-generating transaction of a hotel and its monetary value. He/She checks the originating revenue centre documents and their types such as cash charges or paid

## Front Office Management

outs and all front office posts to appropriate guest or non-guest accounts. Transaction summaries identify the nature and amount of the sale and form the basis of data input into the accounting system. Guest checks are part of this documentation too. A sound accounting system provides independent supporting documents to verify transactions. Night audit should cross-check room revenue information against room rates posted on the guest folio. Comparing housekeeping reports of occupied rooms and front office room rack can avoid occupancy error. The night auditor relies on transaction reports to prove that proper accounting procedures are followed. The auditor's review of daily posts reconciles front office accounts against revenue centres and departments.

### ❖ Credit Monitoring :

Various factors are instrumental in fixing the line of credit to the guest by the hotel. For example, the credit card company, credit limit, guest's credit profile (status/reputation), hotel's house credit limits, etc. At the end of a business day, the night auditor should identify all those accounts, which have either reached or exceeded their assigned credit limits. A list of all such accounts called 'High Balance Report' is made, and such accounts are called High Balance Accounts. A simple posting formula given below should be used :

$$\text{Previous Balance} + \text{Debits} - \text{Credits} = \text{Net Outstanding Balance}$$

### ❖ Daily and Supplemental Transcripts :

The word 'transcript' means a daily report showing guest's transactional activities for that day, and 'supplement transcript' refers to non-guests account. Combined, they represent all transactions for any one day and form the basis of a consolidated report. This front office accounting data is matched against department totals. The sum of charged purchases reported by various revenue-generating centres should equal the total amount of charged purchases posted to guest and non-guest accounts. An out-of-balance condition among non-guest accounts will help the night auditor detect and correct errors.

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## 3.4 TRIAL BALANCE/ ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE :

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When a guest uses services of a bar or restaurant, or avails of laundry facilities, or makes telephone calls, and does not pay cash, but instead signs the respective checks, such transactions are called 'accounts receivables'. These charges are examples of financial transactions where the amounts are to be received by the hotel from the guest. Similarly, this heading will also cover any previous outstanding balance of the guest, transfer of another guest's unpaid account to his/her account (with approval) and any credit card receivable. Any 'returned checks and chargebacks', (maybe a guest's previous skipper account), etc. It can further be said any credit sale of services, amenities and facilities by various departments of the accounts receivable, financial transactions. Such transactions increase the outstanding balance on the guest folio, and the hotel must maintain records of the same. Similarly, V.P.O may be put under this category, since the hotel pays these amounts on behalf of the guest and which he/she has agreed to pay later).

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## 3.5 POSTING OF ROOM CHARGES :

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The night auditor's primary responsibility is to verify that charges have been posted to the guest ledger. To report financial data accurately, all transactions, including room rates, outlet or banquet charges and other miscellaneous charges,

must be posted correctly. This verification process will vary depending on whether the process is manual or automatic. A room rate posting report is included in the night audit report, which verifies the rates for all occupied rooms for management review. The posting of outlet/ancillary charges must be checked as well as the room rates. The food/beverage auditors usually refer to this data. Again, in a manual environment, the night audit team may post each charge to the appropriate guest ledger account.

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### **3.6 DISTRIBUTING CHARGES :**

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The night auditor should use source document to balance all revenue centre departments, i.e. balance all front office accounts against departmental transaction information. First, balance all departments and then look for individual posting errors within an out of balance department. The process of restoring departments is called 'trial balance'. It uncovers any corrections or adjustments to be made during the night audit process. Trial balance can be done before posting room and tax charges so that the trial balance is correct. If the final balance is wrong, then the error is in room and tax charge. In case of a mechanical system, the posting machine will run a D-report. The night auditor's D-report reflects a typical day's guest debit (Dr.) and credit (Cr.) activities in the following sequence.

- Items marked as 'A' are the machine printed totals or the memory totals of the debit (Dr.).
- ❖ **Departments :**
- Items marked 'B' are the machine printed totals of the credit (Cr.) departments. Any corrections listed on the correction sheet are added up by the departments, written in the correction column of the report and deducted from the machine totals. The result is the net total.
- Item marked 'C' is the net day's difference – total debit (Dr.) reduced by the total credit (Cr.).
- Item marked 'D' is the figure of opening debit (Dr.) balance taken from yesterday's D-report and represents the total of all guests' accounts at the beginning.
- By adding 'C' and 'D', the net outstanding result is calculated. It represents the total of all guests' accounts.
- Item marked 'E' represents the last two total amounts and is the machine additions to the final balance on each folio for both transit guests and city ledger accounts.

The night auditor can declare the audit balance when both amounts of net outstanding are identical. Besides, the night auditor may include the calculation of specific statistics such as room occupancy, average room rate (ARR), average revenue per available room (total room revenue/ number of rooms available for sale) and the compiling of the summary report for management.

This report shows the total amount of charge posted to the guest account by departments. Many times the trial balance does not tally due to errors in communication or posting of the amount.

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### 3.7 AUDIT PROCEDURE CREDIT :

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❖ **Credit Monitoring :**

Factors such as credit card company, credit limit, guest's credit profile (status/reputation), hotel's house credit limits, etc. are instrumental in fixing the line of credit with the guest by the hotel. At the end of each business day, the night auditor should identify each account, which has either reached or exceeded their assigned credit limit. A list of all such accounts called 'High Balance Report' is made, and such account is called High Balance Account. A simple basic posting formula given below should be used :

$$\text{Previous Balance} + \text{Debits} - \text{Credits} = \text{Net Outstanding Balance}$$

❖ **Credit Security Measures :**

1. For a walk-in guest with light or little baggage or a questionable character, ask for at least three days' advance and inform various sections not to give any credit to the guest. The notification slips may have abbreviation A.P.C. (all payment cash). It is done through the property management system in hotels wherein there is an option of marking the guest as a "no post" which means that no department can post any charges in the guest folio. They must collect cash from the guest in these circumstances.
2. The front office must list such a guest's accounts for credit investigations and the payment of these charges –
  - Where the guest, after registering and within the first few days' shows unusual accumulations of charges.
  - When the guest's account reaches a specific limit previously set by the hotel.

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### 3.8 OTHER DUTIES OF NIGHT AUDITOR :

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In case of small and medium-size hotels, the night auditor, in addition to his regular duties may also act as night manager or night receptionist and may be required to perform the functions of the 'graveyard' shift. He usually works from 11.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. (next day). A particular hour called as End of the Day- (which is an arbitrary stopping time of business), is fixed. Usually, the night audit begins at 1.00 a.m. and also the hotel business day ends at 1.00 a.m. Typically, the period from 1.00 a.m. (when the audit work starts) to the time when audit work is completed is called Audit Work Time. Any transactions during this period are posted in the next business day. The night audit process is complete when the totals for guests, non-guests and departmental accounts are 'In Balance' or proven correct and is not showing any 'Out of Balance' position (a condition when charges and credits posted to guests and non-guests accounts during the day don't match with the ones posted on to the individual revenue source)

❑ **Check Your Progress – 1 :**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the audit process of taking inventory of the day's work.  
(A) Night Audit (B) Inventory (C) Counting (D) Stocktaking
2. \_\_\_\_\_ reports help the accounting department to compile a more extensive daily report for posting to the general ledger.  
(A) Daily transaction report (B) 'Flash'  
(C) Arrival report (D) Departure report

3. The primary function of night auditor is \_\_\_\_\_ of accounts receivable for the day.  
 (A) closing      (B) opening      (C) auditing      (D) all the above
4. \_\_\_\_\_ + Debits – Credits = Net Outstanding Balance.  
 (A) Credit      (B) Debit  
 (C) Previous Balance      (D) None of the above
5. For a walk-in guest with light or scanty baggage or a suspicious character ask for at least \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (A) three days' advance      (B) full prepayment  
 (C) one day advance      (D) advance not required

### 3.9 LET US SUM UP :

**In this unit, we covered :**

- The role of the night auditor
- Functions of the night audit.
- Distribution of charges

### 3.10 ANSWERS FOR CHECK YOUR PROGRESS :

**Check Your Progress 1 :**

1. (A), 2. (B), 3. (C), 4. (C), 5. (B)

### 3.11 GLOSSARY :

**Credit** – An entry that records a sum received, listed on the right-hand side or column of an account.

**Debit** – An entry that records a sum owed, listed on the left-hand side or column of an account.

**Transactions** – exchange of cash or credit for services purchased

**House Limit** – A guest credit limit established by the hotel's management

**Trial Balance** – A list of all the general ledger accounts (both revenue and capital) contained in the ledger of a business.

**Accounts Receivable** – Amounts due to the hotel

### 3.12 ASSIGNMENT :

Spend a night with night auditor and understand the night audit process of a hotel.

### 3.13 ACTIVITIES :

**Suggested Guest Speaker**

Take an interview with front office auditor from a local hotel to discuss :

- The system the property uses to perform the front office audit
- The typical sequence of front office audit tasks
- The significant reports and summaries involved
- How he/she perceives the role of the front office auditor

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### **3.14 CASE STUDY :**

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Hotel Himalayan Retreat is located in the beautiful surroundings of the Himalayan foothills. It has 200 rooms, which include standard rooms, deluxe rooms, holiday cottages, and luxurious cottages. The hotel also has facilities of adventure sports like trekking and rock climbing. There is a big banquet hall to accommodate 700 persons in theatre-style seating. It targets business clientele.

However, things changed when Hotel Mountain Haven opened last year. The facilities are similar to that of Hotel Himalayan Retreat, but additionally has a golf course, convention centre with a capacity of 1500 persons in theatre-style seating, and a water park. After the opening of Hotel Mountain Haven, there has been a considerable fall in the business of Hotel Himalayan Retreat. The general manager, Mr Bakshi, tries to find out the reasons behind the fall in business.

There were only three persons in the hotel's sales and marketing department. He appointed six more persons with Anand as the sales manager. Anand and Mr Bakshi asked the night auditor of the hotel to provide financial details of the hotel so that they can formulate a marketing plan to re-capture their market share. Assuming you are the night auditor of the hotel :

1. List the sources of information available to you to provide the information requested by Mr Bakshi.
2. Develop a daily report of the hotel, showing relevant information requested by the general manager.
3. List the reports that will be prepared by you.
4. Discuss the role of the night auditor in connection with the vital information generated by him to help the management formulate future strategies to combat any business problem that may arise, as in the given case.

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### **3.15 FURTHER READING :**

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1. Managing Front Office Operations – 10e – Michael L. Kasavana
2. Professional Front Office Management – 2e – Robert H. Woods et al



- 3.0 Learning Objectives**
- 3.1 Unit Introduction**
- 3.2 Various Guest Services**
  - 3.2.1 Handling Guest Mail**
  - 3.2.2 Message Handling**
  - 3.2.3 Control of Keys**
  - 3.2.4 Guest Room Change**
  - 3.2.5 Left Luggage Handling**
  - 3.2.6 Wakeup Call**
- Check Your Progress 1**
- 3.3 Guest Complaints**
  - 3.3.1 Types of Guest Complaint**
  - 3.3.2 Handling Guest Complaints**
- Check Your Progress 2**
- 3.4 Let's Sum Up**
- 3.5 Answers For Check Your Progress**
- 3.6 Glossary**
- 3.7 Assignment**
- 3.8 Activity**
- 3.9 Case Study**
- 3.10 Further Reading**

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### **3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :**

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- State the importance of guest services
- Outline the procedure for handling guest mails, messages, and keys
- Outline the procedure for guest paging and guest room change
- Outline the procedure for handling left luggage and wake up calls
- Outline the procedure for resolving guest complaints

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### **3.1 UNIT INTRODUCTION :**

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In previous chapters, we have read about pre-registration, registration and check out procedure. However, during the stay, the front office is the centre of many activities. Once the guest checks in the hotel he avails many services. The hotel is creating moments into memories. Many services have procedure to follow to give satisfaction. While the hotel strives to give one hundred percent perfect

service there are bound to be some amount of service dissatisfaction. In this chapter we will also see how it is important to recover from bad service.

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## **3.2 VARIOUS GUEST SERVICES :**

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When the guest stays at the hotel, it requires various types of assistance. Front office staff provide multiple services to the guest. Guest expect their emails, messages, telephone calls and visitors are handled carefully. Guests in the hotel also need waking up at a specific time on request. Depending on the guests' requirements, the front office takes care of their letters, messages, keys, and left luggage. When requested, the front office also does room changes.

### **3.2.1 Handling Guest Mail :**

The guests receive letters, parcels, and packets at the hotel address. All mails addressed to the hotel are received by the front office as per the hotel rules. Mails are divided into two categories, i.e., guest mail and hotel mail.

Incoming mails are of two types :

**Ordinary :** The mails whose delivery record is not maintained by the delivering agency.

**Registered :** The mails whose delivery record is maintained by the delivering agency are known as registered mails.

#### **The procedure of mail delivery**

1. Stamp the date and time of receipt on every mail record.
2. Sort the letters/parcels as guest and hotels.
3. Arrange in alphabetical order.
4. Next, sort the hotel mails into official or employee mails.
5. Send employee mails to the time office for delivery.
6. Deliver official mails to the respective offices.
7. Send guest mails to the information section.
8. The information section attendant will further sort the mails into the following categories.
  - a. Resident (staying) guests
  - b. Checked-out (departed) guest
  - c. Future guest (guest with a confirmed reservation for future dates)
  - d. The mails of the resident guests are delivered in the guest room by bell boys if the guest is present in the rooms. If they are out, the mails are placed in the key rack and delivered when then come to collect the room keys.
  - e. The mails of checked out guests are sent to the back office, from where the mails forwarding addresses are collected for re-direction.
  - f. The mails for future guests are sent to the reservation section, where they are placed along with the reservation record. The mails are attached with the pre-filled registration card and delivered to the guest at the time of registration.

### **3.2.2 Message Handling :**

Sometimes, there are calls or visitors for a resident guest when he/she is not present in the hotel. In such a situation, the front desk delivers the same as soon as the guest comes back.

## **Front Office Management**

**Message handling Procedure** – Every hotel has its SOP (standard operating procedure) for handling message. Given below is a popular one.

1. When a guest has a visitor or a call, the front desk attendant should look at the information rack to see if the guest is a resident or has already checked-out.
2. In the case of a resident guest, the desk attendant must check whether he/she is present in the room. If not, then the desk attendant must check the key rack for the location form or any instruction left by the guest. If the same is available, then act as per the instruction of the guest.
3. If a guest has not left any instructions at the front desk, the desk attendant should note the message for the guest on a message slip.
4. The message slip is prepared in duplicate, and the original is placed in the key rack. The matching copy is placed in a message slip envelope and slid through the door of the guest room by a bell attendant.
5. If a visitor enquires for a guest who has checked out of the hotel, the front desk could inform the visitor based on instructions left by the guest.
6. If there is a call for a forthcoming guest, then the desk attendant notes the message on a message slip and sends it to the back office where it is placed with the reservation records.

### **3.2.3 Control of Keys :**

The front desk must retain the room keys in safe custody to ensure the care and safety of the guest's belongings. The front desk should keep strict control over the keys to :

1. Prevent unlawful access to the guest room.
2. Identify who all entered the guest room.
3. Ensure the security of the guest and the guests' belongings.
4. Prevent intrusion in the guest's privacy.

The room keys of unoccupied rooms should be placed in the mail and key rack at the front desk. The keys of the occupied rooms should be with the guest while they are in the hotel. When guests go out of the hotel, they should leave the keys with the front desk. To ensure the key is given to the right guest, the guest should be asked for id card, which can be verified against the information rack.

There are at times when a room key may be lost, or a guest may forget to return the key. In the case of a manual key, the door lock should be immediately changed. In case of computerised door locking the lock should be recoded.

### **3.2.4 Guest Room Change :**

Guest rooms are an essential commodity of a hotel. In case a room does not match the guest's expectations, he/she may request an alternative. There are times when the hotel may wish to change a resident guest's room. A guest may want to change the room under the following circumstances

- The room assigned not as per the choice of guest
- Room amenities are not working properly
- Number of room occupants

The hotel may want to change the guest's room under the following circumstances.

- A guest was upgraded as the lower category was not available.
- If guest extended his stay
- If rooms require maintenance

❖ **Procedure for changing rooms :**

1. Front office informs the guest about the room change in advance to allow the guest to pack.
2. The room change slip is filed. Six copies are made and distributed to the reception, bell desk, bell captain, front office cashier, telephone exchange, housekeeping, and room service – and takes authorisation from the duty manager.
3. A bell attendant is given the key to a new room who then proceeds to the guest room to move the guest's luggage.
4. In case of a dead move, the bell attendant requests the room/floor attendant to open the guest room. If it is a live move, he asks the guest to allow him to move the luggage.
5. The bell attendant removes guest belongings from the room and locks the room. He then carries the belongings from the room and hands over the new room key to the guest. He collects the key of the room being vacated from the guest and deposits the same at the front desk.

**3.2.5 Left Luggage Handling :**

Sometimes guests may check out of their rooms but wish to leave their luggage in the hotel and collect it later. At times the guest has a flight in the late evening or may vacate the room to save late check out charges. In such cases, the guest luggage is kept in the left luggage room.

❖ **Procedure for left luggage handling :**

1. The luggage should be placed in the left luggage room only after the guest clears his bill.
2. A luggage tag is filled and tied to each piece of luggage.
3. The details of the luggage are then entered in the left luggage register.
4. Counterfoil of luggage tag is handed over to the guest (to be presented at the time of collecting the luggage back).
5. The luggage is then placed in the left luggage room.

❖ **Procedure to return guest luggage from the left luggage room :**

1. Guest should present the luggage tag (counterfoil).
2. Front desk attendant tallies the luggage tag counterfoil with the tag on the baggage.
3. Desk attendant makes an entry in the luggage register and hands over the luggage to the guest.

**3.2.6 Wakeup Call :**

Hotels offer wake up call services, wherein the hotel staff makes a telephone call at a requested time to awaken a guest. The guest may call the telephone operator of the hotel and give request to be woken up at a particular

## Front Office Management

time. The time of the wakeup call is registered in the wakeup call register. The telephone operator calls the room at a specific time.

Hotels also give wakeup calls to crews of airlines on the crew leader's or airline's request. Tea/coffee or breakfast orders are also taken. The information about food and beverage orders is passed to the room service or restaurant to make the necessary arrangement. The front office also communicates the timing and venue of the meals to the crew leader.

### ❑ Check Your Progress – 1 :

- Mails received at the information desk at they may be broadly classified as :
  - Hotel Mail
  - Guest Mail
  - A & B
  - None of the above
- The guest mails may further be grouped into the following :
  - Resident guest
  - Departed yet-to-arrive
  - Departed
  - All the above
- The facility of awakening guests is known as :
  - Warning call
  - Walking call
  - Wakeup call
  - Worship Call
- Where should one place the message received for the guest who is out of the premises for prompt and ensured delivery ?
  - In the pocket of the front desk attendant
  - Anywhere
  - In the key and mail rack along with room keys
  - With the housekeeping floor attendant
- Mails are Sorted as hotel mails or guest mails after they are received at the front desk.
  - True
  - False
- The mails received for the future guest having confirmed reservation are sent to the reservation office to be kept with the reservation docket.
  - True
  - False
- Hotels provide the facility of keeping the luggage of a guest after the departure of the guest.
  - True
  - False
- A \_\_\_\_\_ tag is attached to every piece of luggage that is kept in the left luggage room.
- The message slip is kept in the \_\_\_\_\_ rack with the room keys for prompt delivery to the guests.
- If a guest is not in his room and wishes to be informed in case there is a visitor for him, he fills a/an \_\_\_\_\_ form.

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### 3.3 GUEST COMPLAINTS :

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*"Complaining customer can be the best opportunity to show how good you are. Moreover, create an evangelist." – Shep Hyke*

*"It takes months to find a customer. Seconds to lose one." – Vince Lombardi*

These quotes very clearly prove that handling customer satisfaction is the utmost importance to the hotel staff. However, when the customer is not happy with the services provided by the hotel, they express their dissatisfaction, it is called a complaint.

Complaining guest is significant as they allow the hotel a second chance or have faith in the hotel services. It is vital to treat every complaint, whether small or big priority.

### **3.3.1 Types of Guest Complaint :**

The guest complaints can be divided into four major categories :

1. **Mechanical** – Mechanical complaints are related to the breakdown of systems and equipment in the guest room, like television, mini-bar, air conditioner, Wi-Fi, Hot water, light, etc..
2. **Attitudinal** – When a guest feels insulted by rude or harmful behaviour and lodges a complaint. Bad behaviour is referred to as attitudinal complaint.
3. **Service-Related** – Service-related complaints are about problems in services provided by the hotel, such as delay in the room service, or delay in clearance or soiled crockery from the room.
4. **Unusual Complaints** – Complaints which the hotel does not have any control over. For example, a guest may complain about the lack of a golf course in a hotel.

### **3.3.2 Handling Guest Complaints :**

The front office should handle the complaint very diligently and diplomatically. Front office personnel should display empathy and decision-making skills.

These guidelines may be followed while handling guest complaints.

1. Listen carefully without interruptions, with empathy.
2. Show concern and take the complaint seriously.
3. Never argue. Remember, the guest is always right.
4. Never try to win an argument – you may win an argument at the cost of a lost guest.
5. Where possible, isolate the guest so that other guest may not overhear
6. Offer choices and never make false promises.
7. Monitor the corrective measures
8. Follow up and inform the guest about the solution.
9. If unable to resolve the guest problem, consult your superiors.

#### **□ Check Your Progress – 2 :**

1. Complaining guests are very important as they allow the hotel a \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) bad reputation                      (B) second chance  
(C) good advertisement                (D) all the above
2. Breakdown of water tap in the bathroom is an example of \_\_\_\_\_ type of complaint.  
(A) unusual            (B) attitudinal        (C) mechanical        (D) service-related

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3. A guest staying in The Lords Hotel, Mumbai complains that he wants a hill view room. This is a/an \_\_\_\_\_ complaint.  
(A) unusual (B) attitudinal (C) mechanical (D) service-related
4. The order for lunch in the room was placed at 1300 Hrs. Guest calls up at 1400 Hrs and complains to the food and beverage manager. This is a \_\_\_\_\_ type of complaint  
(A) unusual (B) attitudinal (C) mechanical (D) service-related
5. \_\_\_\_\_ carefully without interruptions, with empathy.  
(A) See (B) Hear (C) Listen (D) All the above
6. Offer choices and never make \_\_\_\_\_ promises.  
(A) true (B) false (C) tall (D) all the above

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### 3.4 LET'S SUM UP :

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In this unit, we have listed the different front office services provided to guests during the third phase of the guest cycle, i.e., their stay in the hotel. The various services include mail and message handling, telephone calls. In case the guest or the hotel require a room change, the front office ensures that it is carried out smoothly and efficiently. If guests have a complaint, the front office staff should have an answer to that too. All services contribute to guest satisfaction, which ensures repeat business and positive word-of-mouth publicity.

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### 3.5 ANSWERS FOR CHECK YOUR PROGRESS :

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**Check Your Progress 1 :**

1. (C), 2. (D), 3. (C), 4. (C), 5. (A), 6. (A), 7. (A),
8. (LUGGAGE), 9. (RACK), 10. (LOCATION)

**Check Your Progress 2 :**

1. (B), 2. (C), 3. (A), 4. (D), 5. (C), 6. (C)

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### 3.6 GLOSSARY :

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**Attitudinal Complaint** – Complaint about the behaviour of hotel staff

**Card Key** – A plastic card with a magnetic strip that has the code to open a guest room in an electronic locking system.

**Guest Paging** – Locating guests in a specified area of the hotel.

**Left Luggage Room** – A room where the luggage of guests who have checked out of their rooms and settled their bills, is stored.

**Location form** – A form in which a guest gives information about her whereabouts and provides instructions to follow if someone visits or calls her absence.

**Mail Logbook** – A book in which the hotel maintains a record of all received mails.

**Mechanical complaint** – Complaint regarding the malfunctioning of equipment in the guest room.

**Message slip** – The slip on which messages for guests are taken and delivered to the guest.

**Ordinary mail** – The mails whose delivery record is not maintained by delivering agency.

**Registered mail** – The mails whose delivery record is maintained by delivering agency.

**Service-related complaint** – Complaint about hotel services.

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### **3.7 ASSIGNMENT :**

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Visit a hotel and watch how the bell desk handles luggage. Identify the steps that are followed by the bell attendants.

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### **3.8 ACTIVITY :**

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Locate the format of a wakeup call sheet for groups and individuals, and practice filling them.

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### **3.9 CASE STUDY :**

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Rahul Roy has just been hired by the Ananda Inn to be the new front desk manager. Rahul is moving from another town, so the general manager of the Ananda Inn is allowing him to stay a few nights until he can find permanent housing. Rahul arrives at the inn about 6 P.M. on the night before he is to start work. There are several guests at the front desk and several front desk agents. Before approaching the desk to check in, Rahul takes a few moments to listen and observe what is going on. The first guest he observes is asking for a key to a room. The front desk agent, Jim, asks the guest for his name and verifies it in the computer system before handing over the key. The second guest has a complaint. He is upset that his room is not made up and he has an important dinner appointment. The desk agent, Nancy, tells the guest that housekeeping is closed and she doesn't know what to do. The third guest, Mr. Sharma, is trying to check in. However, the front desk agent, who is not wearing a name badge, claims he cannot find any reservation for Mr. Sharma. The next guest asks to use a safe deposit box. Nancy tells the guest that the hotel is out of safe deposit boxes because some of the boxes do not have keys. Finally, a fourth guest approaches Jim and asks where a good place is to have dinner. The Ananda Inn is known for its fresh fish and beautiful view of the river and woods beyond. Jim recommends a steak house down the street.

1. What did Rahul observe that was correct ? What did Rahul observe that needs to be corrected ?
2. What could Nancy do to resolve the complaint for the guest whose room is not clean ?
3. What other resources should Rahul use to identify guest and operational problems at the front desk ?
4. How should Rahul address these issues with his new staff ?

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### **3.10 FURTHER READING :**

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1. Managing Front Office Operations – 10e – Michael Kasavana
2. Professional Front Office Management – 2e – Robert H Woods, Jack Ninemeier, David Hayes & Michele A Austin

**UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 4.0 Learning Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Front Office Communication
- 4.3 Importance of Communication
- 4.4 Types of Communication
  - 4.4.1 Written Communication
  - 4.4.2 Oral Communication
  - 4.4.3 Non-Verbal Communication
- 4.5 Flow Of Communication
- 4.6 Log Book
- 4.7 Importance of Telephone Directory
- 4.8 Procedure of Mail Handling
  - 4.8.1 Classification of Incoming Mail
  - 4.8.2 Handling of Parcel And Registered Mail
  - 4.8.3 Handling of Hotel Mail
  - 4.8.4 Handling of Outgoing Mail
- 4.9 Handling of Telephone Service
  - 4.9.1 General Telephone Manners
  - 4.9.2 Telephone Communication
  - 4.9.3 Use of Telephones In Departmental Operations
- Check Your Progress 1
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Answers To Check Your Progress
- 4.12 Glossary
- 4.13 Assignment
- 4.14 Activity
- 4.15 Case Study
- 4.16 Further Reading

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**4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :**

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In this unit, we have discussed communication and front office.

**After completing this unit, you should be able to :**

- State the importance and different types of communication.
- Discuss the role of communication in fulfilling front office responsibilities.

- Describe the use of communication records such as logbook and information directory.
- Explain the telephonic guest services provided by the front office and telephone etiquette.
- Track the handling of hotel mail.
- Discuss the communication between the front office and other departments of the hotel.

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION :**

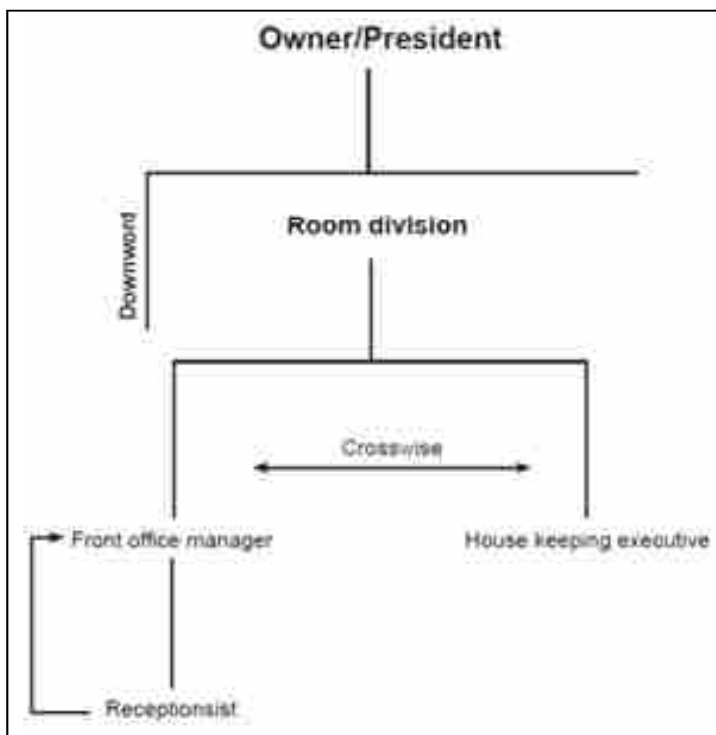
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Communication is a process where a sender imparts or exchanges information by speaking, writing or using some other medium and receiver decodes the message and gives feedback to the sender. The whole process of communication is incomplete until the sender receives feedback. Communication is the exchange of information and ideas from one person to another. A sender transmits an idea, information or feeling to a receiver. Whereas, the receiver need not be present or be aware of the sender's intent for the act of communication to occur. Effective communication is evident only when the receiver understands information or idea precisely as the sender intended to convey. Many problems in organisations are the direct result of people failing to communicate, leading to confusion and operational breakdown.

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#### **4.2 FRONT OFFICE COMMUNICATION :**

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*Fig. 1 : Flow of Communication*

Communication in the front office is essential for the proper coordination between the various departments of the hotel, and it is equally vital that there is good communication within the department also. The front office is the nerve centre of the hotel. It has to be connected with the various departments of the hotels for providing various services to the guest. For easy operations, communication amongst the department staff is equally important. There are many methods of communication within organisations. In case of hotels, the

communication includes the telephone, letters, fax, emails, computerised displays, CRS (central reservation system) system and printouts, various reports (generated within the organisation and from outside the organisation), memos, forms of one kind or another, publicity, advertisements, hotel directories, brochures, notice boards, placards and other static displays, public address systems, paging system automated Alarm systems and face-to-face conversations.

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### **4.3 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION :**

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Good communication is essential for establishing a long-lasting relationship with the guests. The opinion of the guest depends upon their experience at the hotel. Even though hotels offer accommodation, food and other services, what guests seek from them is friendly treatment from the hotel staff. Thus, effective communication is essential to comfort guests. Just as communication with the guest is critical, communication within the departments of the hotel is equally important. Following are the reasons that necessitate effective communication :

**Decision making :** The management makes decisions based on information provided to them. Clear and precise communication enables them to take decisions effectively.

**Delegating the authority :** Managers make decisions and execute them through their subordinates. If the instructions given are clear, it will enable them to function efficiently.

**Job satisfaction :** Open communication and frequent discussions and feedback from the superiors boosts the morale of staff members. If employees feel that they are heard and their concerns resolved, they tend to focus on their jobs. It leads to improved job performance and in turn, job satisfaction.

**Planning :** Reservation diary, staff briefings, occupancy status report, sales report are the different tools of communication through which management gathers information. This information is essential for future planning.

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### **4.4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION :**

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Communication is grouped into two groups as verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is further sub-grouped into two as written and oral communication. Non-verbal communication has many elements, such as body language, eye contact, voice, etc.

#### **4.4.1 Written Communication :**

Written communication is done using written symbols. It can be in the form of letters, fax, memos, reports, notes, write-ups, manuals, emails etc. Information that is not written correctly creates confusion and misleads the readers. Written communication serves as permanent records which can be stored for future use. In case readers belong to different geographical areas where accents are different, written communication becomes easier to understand. High cost, time-consuming, increased paperwork and a lack of immediate response are the demerits of written communication.

#### **4.4.2 Oral Communication :**

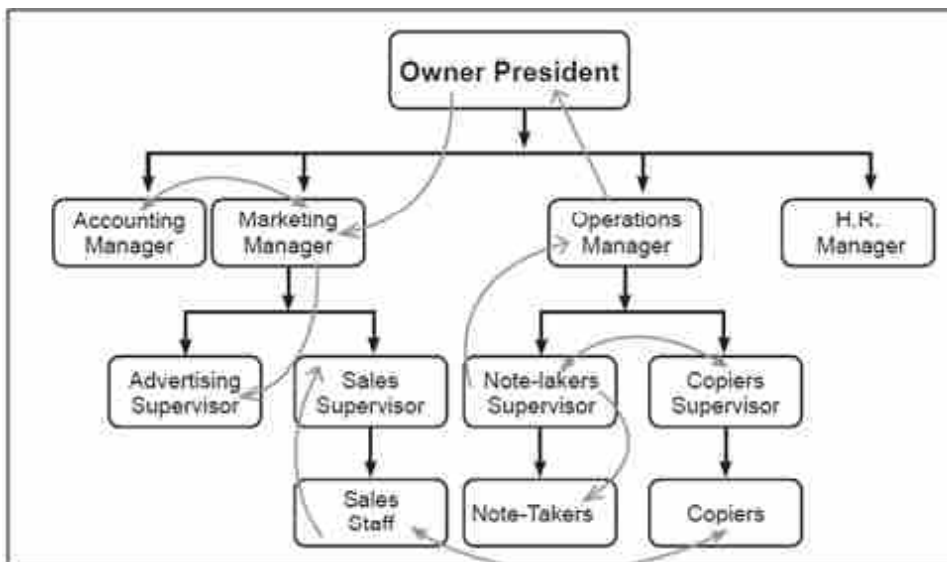
Spoken words make oral communication. Both sender and receiver of the information use words to express themselves. It is easy, effective and gives immediate response. To understand the information communicated by others, one

should listen carefully, which requires voluntary attention and understanding. For example, while recording complaints of unhappy guests, conversing with the travel agents or while taking instructions from management, one should listen patiently. Doing so enables the employees to perform to the satisfaction of the speaker. Effective listening by both management and employees results in increased productivity. But it has disadvantages of lack of authenticity and maintenance of records.

#### 4.4.3 Non-Verbal Communication :

Communication is also possible without words. This type of passing of information speaks about the relationship among people and is often more important than conveying through words. Non-verbal communication means the messages are sent through body language, posture and facial expressions. But it is also important to note that the gestures may be interpreted differently due to cultural differences. There is no one action which means the same all over the world; thus, it is imperative that a message is interpreted exactly the way it is intended.

#### 4.5 FLOW OF COMMUNICATION :



*Fig. 2 : Flow of communication*

**Upward communication :** When the information flows from subordinates (e.g. various reports or recommendations, etc.) to management, i.e. from a lower level to the upper level, it is called as upward communication. Suggestion boxes, review reports, complaints, etc. help the management to collect staff as well as guest feedback.

**Downward communication :** It flows from upper level to the lower level when the managers inform, instruct, or advice their subordinates about different policies and procedures in the form of memos, letters, mails and notices. Care should be taken to balance it with adequate upward communication.

**Horizontal communication :** It takes place amongst the groups of the same level in the organisation. It enables the sharing of information amongst peers, thereby building cooperation among the various branches of an organisation.

**Crosswise communication :** it flows in all directions and across all levels. Any employee can communicate with other employees at any level. In certain

situations, bypassing vertical and horizontal channels speeds up the action and prevents misunderstanding.

Now let us see different tools used by the hotel for effective communication.

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#### **4.6 LOG BOOK :**

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The front desk operates in shifts, and a different set of employees staffs each shift giving rise to the need for 'communication' between staff members of one shift to the other. Guest information that requires in-depth explanation or other matters regarding the operation is communicated via 'pass on log'. The pass on log takes the form of a large book, thus the name 'log book'. It documents daily activity and other issues so that a permanent record exists and is a written, recorded form of communication within the department. It is used to transfer any messages or instructions to the next shift, or for any specific person. For example, the staff may pass the information on VIPs in-house, VIP arrivals and important events in the hotel. This record helps in smooth functioning through coordination amongst departmental staff.

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#### **4.7 IMPORTANCE OF TELEPHONE DIRECTORY :**

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The front office department is the 'source of information' for all the guests. It provides information about the various facilities and services of the hotel and information about the city such as the routes to the nearest airport or railway station or hospitals and banks.

The front office staff must be able to respond in a knowledgeable way when guests contact the front desk for information. To provide this service satisfactorily the front office accumulates such data in the form of information directory. The information directory includes the following.

- Local restaurant recommendations
- Contacting a taxi company
- Directions to the local companies
- Directions to the nearest shopping centre, chemist, entertainment centres, cinema halls, places of interest in the city (spiritual, historical, scenic/wildlife sanctuaries etc.)
- Information regarding religious places
- Location of nearest branches of various banks, automated teller machine
- All information regarding guest services and facilities
- Information about the policies of the hotel

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#### **4.8 PROCEDURE OF MAIL HANDLING :**

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Handling of mail is an essential function performed at the front desk and is expected to be efficient. Delays or mistakes may lead to guest dissatisfaction.

##### **4.8.1 Classification of Incoming Mail :**

- Mail for the guest
- Mail for the hotel

Mail Handling Procedure for each guest type The mail is received at the bell desk or the information counter where it is sorted into guest mail and hotel mail and arranged alphabetically. After that, the mail is dated and stamped.

The guest mail can be classified into :

- a. Mail for in-house guests
- b. Guests expected on that day
- c. Guest who have already checked out
- d. Guest not yet arrived

Let us see how each of the above categories is handled :

- a. Mail for in-house guests : When a mail is received for an in-house guest, and the guest is in the room, inform him/her. If the guest asks for the mail to be delivered to the room, do so through the bell attendant. If the guest is not in the room, hand over the mail when he/she returns. The guest may also be informed using a 'mail advice slip' hung on the doorknob/handle. For this purpose, hotels also use message light on telephones or doors.
- b. Guests expected on that day : Mails for guests arriving on that day are kept at the reception with a mention on the reservation slip (in the PMS). On arrival of the guest, the mail is handed over.
- c. Guest who have already checked out : Mails of guests who have checked out are forwarded according to the instructions on the 'mail forwarding slip'. When guests leave no mail forwarding instructions, the mail is returned after 15 days or as per the policy of the hotel.
- d. Guest who has not arrived- if the guest is yet to arrive, but his/her mail has come, then it as to be arranged date-wise, alphabetically at the reception and handed over upon arrival.

#### **4.8.2 Handling of Parcel and Registered Mail :**

Whenever the hotel receives a registered mail or parcels for the guest, a separate register is maintained by the staff. After receiving an article and its subsequent delivery, this register is updated.

#### **4.8.3 Handling of Hotel Mail :**

Mail could be of individual staff, any department or management senior staff. In case of junior staff mail, the mail is sent to 'time office' where the staff coming on duty or going off duty can collect the mail. In the case of departmental mail or senior staff mail, it is sent to their office.

#### **4.8.4 Handling of Outgoing Mail :**

The senior bell attendant is responsible for all outgoing mail. He weighs it, puts appropriate value postage stamps on it and posts it. A Value Paid Out (V.P.O) voucher is generated, and the guest's signature is obtained on the voucher.

**Note :** Many hotels record mail handling details in the 'front office mail logbook'.

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### **4.9 HANDLING OF TELEPHONE SERVICE :**

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Communication is an essential function for effective and efficient operation in any hotel. A telephone is a tool through which the hotel can communicate with the outside world and within the hotel itself. Providing satisfactory telephone services lead to a 'satisfied guest', so the hotel management renders superior telephone services through the telephone department. Satisfying the personal requirement of the guest demands cheerfulness, speed, accuracy and cooperation in telephone service.

#### **4.9.1 General Telephone Manners :**

The telephone section offers various services in the hotel. Each service needs to be handled promptly and courteously. Hence, telephone operators must have a thorough knowledge of the procedures involved.

**Complaints :** A guest might call up the reception if he/she faces difficulties during his/her stay. Once the complaint is received, connect the guest to the concerned department in-charge by saying – "One moment please, I will connect you with the supervisor". While doing so show your genuine concern for the guest. Avoid sounding indifferent at any point in the conversation.

**Handling outgoing calls :** The guests are given direct dialling in their rooms, but in some instances, the guest may ask the operator to get the number. The operator has to say "May I help you please", in a cheerful voice. In case the number that is being dialled is busy, get back to the guest saying, "I am sorry the number is busy. May I call you again ?" Before connecting a number to the guest, ensure that the dialled number is correct.

**Connecting in-house :** The guest is provided with in-house service numbers in larger hotels, but in small hotels, this may not be the case. Even when the numbers are provided, guests may still ask the operator for the required services. In such cases, be patient and inform the appropriate service department to get in touch with the guest. Make sure that you get the correct room number of the guest.

**Handling incoming calls :** All the incoming calls have to pass through the telephone operator. When the operator picks up the incoming calls, he/she should wish according to the time of the day and announce the name of the hotel. "Good Morning, Hotel ABC". Whenever receiving calls for specific room guests, always ask for the caller's name. Connect the room guest only after announcing the name of the caller. In case there is no response, find out if the caller wishes to leave any message and connect the caller to the information desk by saying – "I am connecting you to the information desk, you may please leave your message with them". In some hotels, the calls for the guest may be directly transferred to the reception desk.

Before connecting a call to the guest room,

- Check if there is any 'do not disturb' intimation left by the guests.
- If so, politely note the message.
- It may also be that the guest is expecting a call and he may be inside the hotel premises but not in the room.
- If he has left a 'where about' slip, then transfer the call to that particular area.
- Take care not to connect callers with whom guests do not wish to speak and have so instructed.

The telephone operator also deals with calls for the official purpose of the various department and staff. The call, in this case, is directly connected to the particular department.

**Time Request :** The operator may be requested to tell the time, give the time shown on the clock in a manner of, 'eight minutes after seven', 'seventeen minutes to ten" etc.

**Wake-up calls :** Receiving and handling wake-up calls is a significant service provided by the telephone operator. Here the guest requests the operator to be called at a specified time. One has to note down carefully the room number of the guest so that this wake-up call is not given to any wrong guest due to negligence. Similarly, make sure that the time of wake-up call is accurately jotted down in 24 hours clock time so that there is no confusion about request am / pm. While receiving a wake-up call request, be extra attentive and repeat the details to the guest. Entries are made in the designated column of the wake-up call sheet. While giving a wake-up call, the operator should say "Good morning Mr. Sharma it is three o'clock". If there is no response, the operator may call again. Sometimes guests receive the call but may not respond. The operator may call again and wait for an acknowledgement. When the task is completed, the wake-up call sheet is updated. In some cases, the guest may receive the call but may request a call back after some time. Repeat the time given and once again update the wake-up call sheet.

**STD/ ISD Calls :** In the age of the mobile phone, the role of the telephone operator has considerably changed. Despite this, the guest may still want to use the landline telephones to make a long-distance call. Although hotels offer direct dialling facility, the STD/ISD services may not be provided. For this, the guest has to request the telephone operator; the operator connects the number, notes down the duration to charge the guest accordingly.

**Handling calls for checkout guests :** The telephone department must be aware of all the checkouts of the day. A notice about the departed guests is received from the information attendant. Using this update, the operator answers callers for checked out guests by stating – "Mr ABC was staying with us, but has checked out today". It is a well-known fact that the telephones section is essential to communication. Therefore, telephone operators should practice the highest levels of telephone etiquette to earn an appreciation and create a professional image. To achieve this :

- Organise and plan your daily duties. Keep a pencil and notepad ready.
- Answer all calls courteously and promptly.
- Identify your establishment, department, yourself.
- Ask the caller's identity.
- Should not sound mechanical; instead speak clearly, slowly with voice modulations at the appropriate instances.
- Do not rush.
- Make notes, write clearly and legibly.
- Repeat the information taken down.
- Inform the caller courteously when you are transferring the call.
- Complete the call.

#### **4.9.2 Telephone Communication :**

While communicating on the telephone, the following points must be kept in mind :

- Callers may sense your expressions, so be courteous. Practice voice modulation.
- Practice being an active listener.

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- There is a purpose behind each call. Do not keep the caller on hold for too long.
- Pick up the phone within three rings.
- Do not mispronounce names.
- While receiving an outside call, remember that you could be the first person that the caller is coming into contact.
- Do not pass on any information you are not sure.
- Make entry into logbook for any specific request or incomplete task.

### 4.9.3 Use of Telephones in Departmental Operations :

To perform departmental functions, departments communicate with each other through the telephone department. The telephone department has to coordinate with the other departments. The housekeeping gets complaints from the guests for any maintenance, which is routed through a telephone exchange. The food and beverage department also deals with telephones for room service or banquet events being held in the hotel.

#### ☐ Check Your Progress – 1 :

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the nerve centre of the hotel.  
(A) Housekeeping (B) Front Office  
(C) Food & Beverage Service (D) Human Resource department
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is essential for establishing a long-lasting relationship with the guests.  
(A) Good communication (B) Health  
(C) Wealth (D) Good Service
3. Email is type of \_\_\_\_\_ communication.  
(A) Oral (B) Non-verbal  
(C) Written (D) None of the above
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is easy, effective and gives immediate response.  
(A) Oral (B) Non-verbal  
(C) Written (D) None of the above
5. \_\_\_\_\_ communication means the messages are sent through body language, posture and facial expressions.  
(A) Oral (B) Non-verbal  
(C) Written (D) None of the above
6. When the information flows from subordinates to management, it is called as \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Upward communication (B) Downward communication  
(C) Crosswise communication (D) None of the above
7. When the managers inform, instruct or advice their subordinates about different policies or procedures, it called \_\_\_\_\_ communication.  
(A) Upward communication (B) Downward communication  
(C) Crosswise communication (D) None of the above

8. \_\_\_\_\_ can speed up action and prevents misunderstanding.  
(A) Upward communication                      (B) Downward communication  
(C) Crosswise communication                (D) None of the above
9. \_\_\_\_\_ aids communication between staff of different shifts.  
(A) Logbook    (B) Mail / Parcel Register  
(C) Mail Advice Slip                                (D) None of the above

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#### **4.10 LET US SUM UP :**

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**In this unit, we :**

- Stated the Importance and different types of communication.
- Discussed the role of communication to fulfil front office responsibilities.
- Described the use of different communication records as logbook and information directory.
- Explained the different telephonic guest services provided by the front office and Telephone Manners.
- Tracked the handling of hotel mail.
- Discussed the communication between the front office and other departments of the hotel.

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#### **4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS :**

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**Check Your Progress 1 :**

1. (B), 2. (A), 3. (C), 4. (A), 5. (B), 6. (A), 7. (B), 8. (C), 9. (A)

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#### **4.12 GLOSSARY :**

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**Central reservation system** – The meaning or definition of a CRS or Central Reservation System is a type of reservation software that is used to update and maintain information of a hotel about inventory and rates so that hotels can manage guest reservations and the process around such reservations in real-time.

**Delegating** – entrust (a task or responsibility) to another person, typically one who is less senior than oneself.

**Non-Verbal Communication** – Nonverbal communication is the transmission of messages or signals through a nonverbal platform such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and the distance between two individuals.

**Logbook** – A logbook is a book in which someone records details and events relating to something, for example, a guest request, follow up required and /or the action taken. It is used to pass information from one shift personnel to another.

**STD/ ISD Calls** – SD (International Subscriber Dialling) stands for International calls, STD (Subscriber's Trunk Dialling) for inter-state calls and PCO (Public Call Office) for local calls.

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#### **4.13 ASSIGNMENT :**

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Visit a hotel and find out the different types of equipment that are used for communication. Make a list of the same and compare them the basis of :

1. Speed of communication
2. Accuracy in communication
3. Technical difficulties in using the equipment
4. Do these equipments require specialised skills to operate ?

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#### **4.14 ACTIVITY :**

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##### **Group Discussion**

Inter-departmental communication is the backbone for efficient hotel operations. Discuss the pro, cons and best practices for achieving the same.

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#### **4.15 CASE STUDY :**

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Mr Vraj Vakil is the CEO of a multinational company who visits Mumbai twice a month for a week and always stays in Hotel Sea View in the deluxe suite 405, which overlooks the Arabian Sea. He is a very important guest for the hotel, and the hotel staff is always on its toes to keep him satisfied. His secretary calls up at 11 p.m. to amend the flight details for the next day's pick up in a Mercedes Benz. Mr Vakil's flight was supposed to reach at 8 a.m., but due to change in his plans, he is now arriving by an earlier flight at 5 a.m. The front desk attendant takes the arrival information and passes it on only to the concierge who is entangled in peak time check-ins and answering guest queries. By the time he sorts these out, he is exhausted and confirms Mr Vakil's pick up for the next day at 8 a.m. instead of 5 a.m. Mr Vakil in the hotel at 7 a.m. in a taxi and his preferred suite is not ready (housekeeping was not aware of his early arrival). He is furious and icily gives the duty manager a piece of his mind.

In the above case, discuss the following.

1. How can the duty manager calm Mr Vakil down ?
2. Whose fault is it ?
3. Should the front office attendant have passed on his information to housekeeping as well as to the night shift so that they could have followed up for the necessary arrangements ?
4. Will Mr Vakil continue to stay at Hotel Sea View henceforth ? Why or why not ?

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#### **4.16 FURTHER READING :**

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1. Hotel Front Office Operations and Management – Jatashankar Tiwari – Oxford Publication
2. Managing Front Office Operations – 10th edition – Michael Kasavana – AHLEI Publication.



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**BLOCK SUMMARY :**

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**Communication and  
Front Office**

In this block, we explained what is public relation and discussed the techniques of it. We also stated and illustrated publicity and its specific problems. We understood the role of public relations in a hotel discussed the various attributes of the tourism public relation officer. Described the role of public relation officer and its duties and responsibilities. It takes no additional time, nor does it cost any more, for front desk attendants to be professional and respectful when interacting with guests. When being professional, front desk attendants will be productive rather than be efficient.

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**BLOCK ASSIGNMENT :**

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☐ **Short Answer Questions :**

1. Write in brief about the origin of public relation.
2. What is public relation ?
3. Write in brief about the public relation process ?
4. Explain the procedure for a wakeup call ?
5. Explain the procedure of distributing guest mails in hotels.
6. Explain the role of communication in fulfilling front office responsibilities.
7. Describe the communication between the front office and other departments of the hotel.

☐ **Long Answer Questions :**

1. What do you mean by publicity ?
2. List the different public relation techniques used in the hospitality industry.
3. How is public relation effective in the hotel industry ?
4. Write about the different traits of a Public Relation Officer ?
5. Write about the role of public relation in tourism.
6. How is Public Relation required for the internal public of an organisation ?
7. How is Public Relation required for External public of an organisation ?
8. Write the importance of external public relation.
9. What are the different types of letters received by the hotel ?
10. Explain the method by which a hotel ensures the delivery of guest messages.
11. What are the likely reasons for complaints by guests ? How should a front office assistant handle a complaint ?
12. Describe the use of communication records such as logbook and information directory.
13. Explain the telephonic guest services provided by the front office and telephone etiquette.
14. Track the handling of hotel mail.