



# Guest Services

by Brianna Scanlon

## Eight simple guest service basics that every hotel employee must master

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Picture walking into a hotel lobby to check-in and on your way in you pass an employee who does not acknowledge your presence, nor offer assistance with your luggage. After getting that employee's attention you ask them what time the check-in is and they reply, "I don't know, that's not my job." They then walk away. You then approach the front desk only to overhear a personal conversation that the front desk clerks are having amongst themselves about what they did the night before and their plans for later that evening. Finally, after several awkward seconds, they notice you standing there and begin the check-in process void of emotion and with as little interaction with you as possible.

There is nothing that can ruin a guest's experience while staying at a hotel quicker than poor guest service. While every property may train their employees differently, there are several guest service basics that every employee should be taught and, in turn, master. Although it is important that all employees learn and embrace these concepts, front-line employees need to be even more aware of the proper way to interact with guests. The eight tips below will put any employee on the fast track to delivering better guest satisfaction

1. *Always be aware of the 10/5 rule.* The concept of the 10/5 rule is when an employee is within 10 feet of any guest, the employee should make eye contact with the guest and smile, thereby acknowledging the guest's presence. Once the employee is within 5 feet of the guest the employee must stop what they are doing, if it is a distraction, and then greet the guest verbally, preferably using the guest's last name (if known) in the greeting. This notion is important because it makes guests feel very warm and welcomed by the hotel's employees. A guest that feels welcome will usually maintain a positive image of the property resulting in increased customer satisfaction.
2. *When on the floor an employee is always "on stage".* Employees must be continuously aware that their actions and words, when in any guest areas, will reflect back on the image of the hotel. No guest is interested in hearing about the employee's weekend plans or about their troubles with their girlfriend. Overhearing any of these things could possibly cause guests to become uncomfortable. Personal business should be discussed in the back of the house where no guest will ever be exposed to such unwanted encounters. More ideally, these non-work related matters should not be discussed on the job at all, or only during break time and in a setting where others will not overhear such private conversations.
3. *Never tell a guest "that's not my job".* Guests don't always understand that when they ask one employee a question that employee might not know the answer because it is not their area of expertise. Every employee in the hotel is employed to serve the guest in one capacity or another, or support others that directly interact with guests on a regular basis. Employees must be trained that if they do not know the answer to a guest inquiry, it is imperative that they do not just dismiss the guest but rather make the effort to find out the answer or bring the guest to the person who can properly answer their question for them. Once an inquiry or request is made by a guest to an employee, that employee "owns responsibility" for fulfilling the inquiry or request or handing the inquiry/request to a more qualified employee who can resolve it.
4. *Telling a guest "there is nothing I can do" is not acceptable.* Even if there is nothing the employee themselves can do to satisfy a guest, respond to a complaint, or alleviate a stressful situation, never let the guest know that. There is always something more that can be done, even if it just means empathizing with a frustrated guest about the difficult situation they may be facing. Help the guest in any way that is possible in order to satisfy their request, and if needed, involve a manager than can help facilitate an acceptable resolution. Even just expressing empathy for a guest caught up in a difficult situation can go a long way to demonstrating your concern and willingness to try and find a solution, even if there may be no plausible solution available. Remember, guests rarely lash out at those who empathize and try and help them when they are in need.

5. *Respond to guests with “my pleasure” in place of “no problem”.* Saying “no problem” to a guest gives off the notion that whatever the guest is asking was a problem to begin with. No guest wants to feel that they are a problem because that is not what they are paying for. Since “no problem” is usually used in response to a guest thanking an employee, if the phrase “my pleasure” seems inappropriate, rely on the tried and true standby of “you’re welcome”.
6. *Use a guest name three times per interaction.* Using a guest’s name conveys to the guest the feeling that they are not just a room number and there to help the hotel meet occupancy needs. Three may seem like too much to some, but the best and least awkward way to execute this tip is to use the guest’s name when greeting them, saying good-bye to them, and at least once during the conversation with the guest.
7. *Never use any type of slang when speaking to a guest.* Employees should speak differently to guests than they would to friends. Replace even the simplest phrases such as “yeah” with “yes”, “hey” with “hello” and “on the house” with “complimentary”. Avoid the use of hotel lingo or business jargon such as “reg. card”, “res”, “walking a guest”, or “walk-in” at all times when interacting with guests. To most, these slight distinctions would not make much of a difference, but will sound better to the ears of a guest and convey a better and more sophisticated image of the property.
8. *Avoid placing any blame for problems on guests.* There is always the likelihood that when something goes wrong, and a guest experiences a problem, it may be the result of the guest’s involvement or their personal failure in some way. It is important though that employees do not point out that it is the fault or wrongdoing of the guest when being asked for assistance. For example, guests often unintentionally deactivate their room keys by placing them near cell phones or credit cards. The result is that these guests will then come down to the front desk complaining that the key does not work for some reason. Employees should not accuse the guest of deactivating the card but simply reactivate it and gently remind the guests not to place it near cell phones and credit cards. We all make mistakes from time to time, but nobody enjoys being told that they created a problem, even in if the error was unintentional.

The tips described above are fairly basic in guest service interaction but build a strong foundation for employees and managers to expand upon. Each of these eight guest service basics will help to polish every employee’s presence while at work and will undoubtedly add to increased guest satisfaction at any hotel or resort. ✧

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