

Ask Gail
May/June 2003

Dear Gail:

Our every day work is communicating with people. I wonder if you are able to advise me of any book aid for writing every day messages (Welcome, have a nice stay, have a nice trip, happy birthday, happy anniversary, happy honeymoon, etc.) to our guests? Thank you for your wonderful ezine and your valuable time. I hope to see you in Samos one of these days.

N A
Samos, Greece

Dear NA:

Thank you for the question about letter-writing. Perhaps this website will be of some use: www.writinghelp-central.com/letter-writing.html. We have written about writing effective memos (see TRC Vol 5, No 5, Pg 6) including:

- Be clear about the purpose of the memo.
- Understand who will receive the memo and adapt content accordingly.
- Make sure each paragraph contains one main thought with words chosen carefully.
- Wait three hours before reviewing the content for accuracy and completeness.
- Ensure the final copy is neat in appearance so the message is not disregarded.

Another source is Amazon.com as there are many books written on the subject. Search for "form letters written communication."

Dear Gail:

We have increased guest resistance in providing a driver's license at check-in. Some guests have told sales persons that it is not legal to copy and keep a driver's license on hotel's file. We have had a policy to ask for and copy the number, state, and expiration date of the guest's license for over 10 years. After September 11, 2001, the resistance to give such information has escalated. What is the hotel's legal stand on this issue?

Thanks. JR

Dear JR:

We have checked with several of our risk management experts and they all maintain that it is standard procedure in the hotel industry to ask for the driver's license of arriving guests. In addition, our friends at Hospitality Lawyer confirm It is fine to obtain such identification and probably a good practice today. However, they suggest it is better to ask for a "photo ID" (which could include passport or other identification) rather than limit it just to driver's license. This tactic also assures you will not infringe on the rights of people with disabilities unable to obtain a driver's license.

Dear Gail:

I want to know the best way to clean mildew from marble steps that no longer even look like marble--they have mildewed so badly over decades that they almost appear to be poured concrete.

Pete

Dear Pete:

We have contacted our colleague, Stan Zimmer, a marble guru, to ask your question. He is unsure of whether your steps can be cleaned at this point. Mildew left for a long time will create an acidic environment that spells trouble for calcite as acid will dissolve the stone.

Chances are the best thing would be for the stone to be diamond ground at 80 grit or so and then cleaned with a special marble-cleaning product. Even then, the poultice method of cleaning may be required to break through the stains to lift them up and out.

Once cleaned and restored, the steps should be treated to help prevent them from ever getting mildew again! This situation definitely requires a craftsman's help as it is now a restoration issue and not a cleaning issue alone.

If you would like to contact Stan directly, email him at: marble@prairieinet.net.

Dear Gail:

We are looking at replacing our beds and quite frankly I don't know what questions to ask. Nor do I know how to interpret the answers. For example I know that more coils is good but why is more good and what do I need to know about coils?

Any help you can provide is appreciated. Thanks,
DP

Dear DP:

We published a two-article series about all the details of choosing mattresses and box springs. (Vol. 7, No. 6, Pg. 16 and Vol. 8, No. 1, Pg. 16.) Briefly, hotels are currently using a variety of products. Marriott brands maintain their four-inch foam mattresses from Jamison. While the Sheraton heavenly bed specifies a Simmons 12.5 inch pillow-top innerspring mattress. Experts recommend buying from name-recognized brands because of their consistency of product, quality, durability, warranty coverage and reputation. Be sure to insist on the "no-flip" variety to eliminate the need for rotating the mattress quarterly.