



Housekeeping

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

Determining the correct order to clean guestrooms

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Many housekeeping attendants often express confusion about the proper order in which guestrooms should be cleaned on a daily basis. Should those guestrooms that checked out first be cleaned first? What about requests for “early makeup” by stayover guests or VIP rooms? And what do you do if you have rooms blocked for early arriving guests? This can become a confusing scenario for room attendants, especially since they will not know which guestrooms will likely depart early.

What is clear to most veteran housekeeping managers is that if there is not a clear policy on the order in which guestrooms should be cleaned, room attendants left to their own device will typically choose to clean the unoccupied guestroom closest to the one in which they are currently servicing next. Unless educated on the importance of why certain classifications of guestrooms should be cleaned in a certain sequence, most room attendants will focus on the aspect of personal efficiency. In other words, the shortest distance a room attendant has to move their housekeeping cart to the next available guestroom, the more attractive that room looks to them as the next one to be cleaned. The problem with this method is that while it benefits the housekeeper, it may not necessarily be in the best interest of the hotel itself or arriving guests.

The order in which guestrooms are to be cleaned should be based on ensuring that the front desk has an appropriate inventory of clean and vacant rooms to assign to arriving guests as well as honoring special requests from current guests. When room attendants focus on cleaning stayover rooms whose guests are out and about for the day but they neglect to clean the now empty rooms that guests have checked out from first, the front desk may be in a situation where they have no rooms in the inventory to assign to arriving guests. This will prevent the front desk from being able to check in a guest and force the guest to wait patiently or return at a later time to complete the check-in process and settle into their accommodation. Of course, neither of these options is guest-service focused.

Therefore, the ideal order for determining which guestrooms should be cleaned is as follows:

1. Honor **guest requests for early cleaning** first.
2. Makeup **VIP rooms of stayover guests** (note: any VIP rooms that requests early cleaning should always be cleaned first).
3. Clean any **rooms that are blocked for early arriving guests** (assuming that the room is vacant or was placed out-of-service the previous evening).
4. Thoroughly clean **vacant, dirty rooms** (start with the guestroom closest to the one being serviced now).
5. Service **remaining stayover guestrooms** that are currently vacant.
6. Attend to any **remaining guestrooms** that have not been cleaned yet.

Of course, any request from the front desk for a “rush” on a particular guestroom or guestroom type must always take priority over any other rooms. These “rush” requests typically mean that a guest is waiting in the lobby for the room.



Determining the order in which to clean guestrooms will continually evolve throughout the workday based on which rooms become vacant. Unfortunately, the hotel usually does not know which guests will choose to depart earlier than others. But it does know which guests are VIPs, which rooms have been blocked, and will know when a guest requests early service through the guest service hotline or by calling the front desk or housekeeping. It is the responsibility of the room attendant, housemen, and floor supervisors to note any requests for service from signs placed on guestroom doors and convey this to the room attendant who is serving that section of the hotel. Finally, to keep this system as efficient as possible, housekeeping managers who have access to the property management system must update each room attendant's room assignment sheet with each room's status. ✧

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