



# Housekeeping

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## Establishing par levels for linens is essential to avoid tying up resources

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Linen is the most important recycled inventory item under the executive housekeeper's responsibility. Next to personnel, linen costs are the highest expense in the Housekeeping department. Careful policies and procedures are needed to control the hotel's inventory of linen supplies. The executive housekeeper is responsible for developing and maintaining control procedures for the storage, issuing, use, and replacement of linen inventories.



### Establishing the right par level

The first task in effectively managing linens is to determine the appropriate inventory level for all types of linen used in the hotel. It is important that the inventory level for linens is sufficient to ensure smooth operations in the housekeeping department.

Shortages occur when the inventory level for linens is set too low. Shortages disrupt the work of the Housekeeping department, irritate guests who have to wait for cleaned rooms, reduce the number of readied rooms, and shorten the useful life of linens as a result of intensified laundering.

Although housekeeping operations run smoothly when inventory levels are set too high, Management will object to the inefficient use of linen and to the excessive amount of cash resources tied up in an overstock of supplies.

The par number established for linen inventories is the standard stock level needed to accommodate typical housekeeping operations. One par of linens equals the total number of each type of linen that is needed to outfit all guestrooms one time. This is a number that has recently been revised upward in those hotels that have adopted triple sheeting and extra pillows for each bed. One par of linen is also referred to as a "house setup".

Clearly, one par of linen is not enough for an efficient operation. Linen supplies should be several times above what is needed to outfit all guestrooms just once. Two par of linens is the total number of each type of linen needed to outfit all guestrooms two times; three par is the total number needed to outfit all guestrooms three times; and so on. The executive housekeeper must determine how many par of linens are needed to support efficient operations in the Housekeeping department. When establishing a par number for linens, the executive housekeeper needs to consider three things: the laundry cycle, replacement linens, and emergency situations.

The hotel's laundry cycle is the most important factor in determining linen pars. Some hotels still change and launder much of their linens daily; however, the old "wash everything, every day" rule has been relaxed in many hotels—usually with guest approval—because of environmental concerns. Regardless, at any given time, large amounts of linen are in movement between guestrooms and the laundry. When setting an appropriate linen inventory level, the executive housekeeper must think through the laundry cycle in terms of the hotel's busiest days—when the hotel is at 100 percent occupancy for several days in a row. If Housekeeping manages an efficient on-premises laundry operation, the laundry cycle indicates that housekeeping should maintain three par of linens: one par—linens laundered, stored, and ready for use today; a second par—yesterday's linens, which are being laundered today; and a third par—linens to be stripped from the rooms today and laundered tomorrow. Executive housekeepers also need to figure in guest requests for extra linens, and linens for rollaway beds, sofa beds, and cribs.

This is a sample calculation of how to establish a par stock level for king-size sheets for a hotel that uses an in-house laundry operation and supplies three sheets for each of the property's 300 king-sized beds.

300 king-size beds x 3 sheets per bed = 900 sheets per par number

One par in guestrooms	1 x 900 = 900 sheets
One par in floor linen closets	1 x 900 = 900 sheets
One par soiled in laundry	1 x 900 = 900 sheets
One par replacement stock	1 x 900 = 900 sheets
One par for emergencies	1 x 900 = 900 sheets
Total number	4,500 sheets

**4,500 sheets ÷ 900 sheets/par = 5 par**

### Special consideration for par levels

The laundry cycle in properties that use an outside commercial laundry service will be somewhat longer than the cycle in properties with their own in-house laundry operation. The frequency of collection and delivery services from the commercial laundry will affect the quantities of linen the property needs to stock. The more frequent the service, the less stock is needed to cover the times when the hotel's linen is being transported to and from the laundry service. A

typical turnaround time for a commercial laundry is 48 hours. In this situation, the executive housekeeper may need to add another par of linen to cover linens that are in transit between the hotel and the outside linen service. In addition, some commercial laundries will not collect and deliver on weekends. This means that extra stock will be required to cover those days.

The second factor to consider when establishing linen par levels is the replacement of worn, damaged, lost, or stolen linen. Since linen losses vary from property to property, executive housekeepers will need to determine a reasonable par level for linen replacement based on the property's history. The need for replacement stock can be determined by studying monthly, quarterly, or annual inventory reports in which losses and replacement needs are documented. A general rule of thumb is to store one full par of new linens as replacement stock on an annual basis.

Finally, the executive housekeeper must be prepared for any emergency situation. A power failure or equipment damage may shut down a hotel's laundry operation and interrupt the continuous movement of linens through the laundry cycle. The executive housekeeper may decide to hold one full par of linens in reserve so that housekeeping operations can continue to run smoothly during an emergency.

Therefore, the hotel's laundry cycle, linen replacement needs, and reserve stock for emergencies suggest that a minimum of five par of linen should be maintained on an annual basis. Properties using an outside commercial laundry service will need to add a sixth par to cover linens in transit.

The box above illustrates a sample par calculation for the number of king-size sheets required for a hotel with 300 king-size beds. In this example, 4,500 king-size sheets should be in the hotel linen inventory at all times. Similar calculations need to be performed for every type of linen used in the hotel. ✧

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### Hot tip

Recently, an ATM Machine was wheeled out of a hotel lobby in the Anaheim Disney Resort area, by suspects who were dressed as "repair men". Most hotel ATM's belong to independent third-party ATM companies, so it's very easy to impersonate a "service tech" and remove the entire machine.

Even if your hotel is not in California, it's a good idea to evaluate your ATM location, service schedule etc., to ensure this doesn't happen to you. Get pictures of the ATM service technicians, and post them in the back office, so when someone does show up, your staff can confirm their identity.

You could be liable for the theft of the ATM, depending on what your ATM agreement/contract says. Many of these vendor contracts will state you have to pay for any damage to or theft from the ATM, while it is on your property. Get those contracts out and READ them, so you are not held responsible for anything that happens to the ATM. Often, your insurance provider can help review your contracts, and in some cases offer suggestions to help rewrite them if needed.