



Housekeeping

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The basics of loaning items to guests

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle® the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

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As a service to guests, hotels provide a variety of equipment that travelers commonly need. This equipment is loaned to guests upon request and at no charge. The housekeeping department is typically responsible for maintaining the inventory of guest loan items, responding to loan requests, and tracking the items to make sure they are returned.

Types of guest loan items

The types of items that a hotel makes available for guests to borrow vary from hotel to hotel. Such items typically include refrigerators, sewing kits, air purifiers, white noise machines, cribs, bed boards, computer and phone charge cords, and voltage adapters. Other items kept on hand for guests may include vases, curling irons, a variety of pillows and blankets, specialty communication and alarm devices for guests with disabilities, rollaway cots, and tables and chairs.

Establishing par levels for guest loan items

The types of guest loan items maintained at the hotel generally depend upon the hotel's level of service and the typical needs of its clientele. The quantities maintained in inventory depend on the size of the hotel and the anticipated volume of guest requests. The frequency of guest requests for specific items varies according to the type of hotel, the hotel's occupancy level, the arrival/departure pattern of the day, and the types of guests staying in the hotel at any given time (business, leisure, extended-stay, etc.). The executive housekeeper needs to work with the hotel's general manager and marketing department to identify the kinds and quantities of guest loan items that need to be maintained. The executive housekeeper is responsible for maintaining an adequate supply to meet guest requests.

Inventory control of guest loan items

The executive housekeeper should develop procedures for maintaining accurate inventory records of guest loan items, responding to guest requests, tracking items on loan, and ensuring that borrowed items are returned.

The executive housekeeper needs to maintain a complete and accurate list of all guest loan items stored in the housekeeping department. For each item, the inventory record should reflect the item's name, manufacturer, supplier or vendor, date of purchase, purchase cost, warranty information, and storage location.

The record should also note the par number for each item. This master inventory record of guest loan items should be kept up-to-date as worn or broken items are taken out of service and new items are put into use.

Specific policies and procedures for issuing guest loan items—and for tracking items in use—must be developed. Procedures will be shaped by the nature



of the property's usual clientele and the history of loss or theft of loan items. Whatever method is used to track on-loan items, a balance must be reached between the need to control hotel losses and the need to provide good guest service.

The executive housekeeper can monitor requests for loan items by maintaining a log, such as the one provided in this issue as an insert. This log records the type of item loaned; the guest's room number; and the times of the item's request, delivery, and return. The guest's expected check-out date can also be noted to help track items such as special pillows and bed boards that are generally loaned for the duration of a guest's stay. By using this kind of log, the executive housekeeper can determine what items guests request most, the times particular items are requested, and how long different items remain on loan. This log also helps the executive housekeeper track the locations of items in use and ensure that all items are returned.

Some hotels require that guests sign a receipt for loan items. In this situation, housekeeping employees who deliver loan items to guestrooms should record the type of item, guest name and room number, and the date and time of delivery on the receipt. The employee should also obtain the guest's signature. In addition, some hotels require that guests pay a deposit. The amount of the deposit will vary according to the type of item. In this situation, housekeeping employees who deliver loan items to guestrooms should explain that the amount of the deposit will be charged to the guest's folio in the event the loaned item is not returned.

Some hotels require that prepaying guests with no charge privileges pay a cash deposit for loaned items. In this situation, the guest should be required to come to the front desk to pay the deposit. Under no circumstances should housekeeping personnel or bell staff receive or handle cash deposits.

Receipts for deposits should be taken to the front desk for placement in the guest folio, but the amount should not be posted at this time. When guest items are returned, it is important that the receipt be removed from the guest's folio and immediately destroyed. If this is not done, guests may be charged for a loaned item even though it was returned.

Several other procedures should be considered standard for controlling guest loan items. Whenever possible, any guest requesting items should receive a follow-up call to confirm that he or she received the items and to see if any further assistance is needed. When items are delivered to guestrooms, the guest should be asked to call Housekeeping later that same day to arrange for pickup. If Housekeeping does not hear from the guest for several hours, the guest should be called to check on the status of the loan item. In most cases, items should not be loaned out overnight.

Each guest loan item should be checked regularly to see that it is in proper working condition and safe for guest use. Each item should also be tested on the day it is loaned to ensure that the guest will be able to use it for its intended purpose. Worn, damaged, or broken items should be replaced on an as-needed basis. ✧

(This article is excerpted from the textbook Managing Housekeeping Operations published by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. The textbook is available in print edition in both English and Spanish, or in an online edition. It can also be purchased with a keycode that provides access to an online component that provides additional, interactive material to reinforce the book's content. This online component includes video clips from AH&LEI's training resources, short quizzes, definitions, links to relevant websites, interactive exercises, and industry news. Please visit the AH&LEI website for more details or to purchase: www.ahlei.org)