

Unit-1

Check-out Procedure

Departure Procedure

The last interaction of the guest with the hotel staff takes place during the final phase of the guest cycle which is check-out. During check-out, the guests formally vacate their rooms, settle their bills, and leave the hotel. This phase is very crucial as guests settle their financial transactions with the hotel, and any dispute at this stage can ruin their entire experience whereas a smooth settlement of the bills and check-out would enhance the guests' experience. The speed and accuracy in the preparation and presentation of bills will lead to the maximization of guest satisfaction. Error-free billing and speedy processing of check-out requests reflect the professionalism of the hotel thereby imparting a good impression to the guest. The departure procedure may vary slightly from hotel to hotel according to the degree of automation of the organization.

Departure Procedure in Manual or Semi-automated Systems

The following steps are involved in the departure procedure in manual or semi-automated systems:

Check-out request: A request for check-out is received from the guest either at the front desk or at the bell desk. This information is communicated to all the concerned departments and points of sales. While processing the check-out request, the front desk agent should confirm the guest's details such as name and room number and check the departure date. In case of early departure (i.e., the guest would like to leave before the departure date mentioned at the time of registration), the other departments should be informed.

Luggage handling: The front desk requests the bell captain to send a bellboy to transfer the guest luggage to the lobby. The bellboy fills the departure errand card

and the bell captain makes an entry in the bell captain control sheet. The bellboy goes to the guest room, knocks on the door, and announces himself. After getting due permission from the guest, he enters the room and carries the guest luggage to the lobby.

Apart from carrying the luggage of the guest, the bellboy is also expected following:

- Look around the room for signs of any damage to the hotel property.
- Draw the curtains and lock the balcony and windows.
- Check for any guest belongings left behind by mistake.
- Collect the room keys from the guest.
- Check the mini-bar consumption or politely enquire the guest about the same.
- Lock the room and hang 'clean my room' tag on the door knob, so that the housekeeping department can quickly clean the room for the next occupant.

Accounting all transactions: The front desk informs housekeeping and all points of sale to rush the latest credit transactions to the front desk, so that the cashier can add them to the guest account. It is very difficult to get the payment for unpaid bills after the guest has checked out, unless he/she has gone to another hotel in the same chain or is going to return to the hotel later on. Since the guest might refuse to pay any charges after he/she has checked out, the hotel should ensure that all the transactions have been billed to the guest at the time of account settlement.

Updating guest folio: The front desk cashier updates the guest folio in the following manner:

- Adding the latest credit transactions received from all points of sale.
- Checking if any late check-out charges are applicable, that is, if the check-out time is 12 noon and if the guest checks out at 6 p.m., he/she will be charged for late check-out.

- Checking for any late charges, that is, if there are any latest bills that have not been added to the guest account.
- Examining the current entries in the guest account.

Preparation of Bill: Guest bills are prepared on the basis of guest folios. While preparing the bill, the front desk staff should check if the late check-out charges are applicable, if so, they should be added in the master bill. Late check-out charges are normally point of contention between the hotel and the guest. In order to avoid such a situation the guests are often asked about their expected departure time at the reservation stage itself. At the time of registration, they are again informed about the extra charges in case of late check-out.

The front desk cashier should also pay special care to late charges while preparing the bills for settlement. A late charge is an outstanding payment from the guest, the bill for which reaches the front desk cashier after the master bill has been prepared. Some common examples of late charges are as follows:

- Breakfast bills
- Telephone bills
- Mini-bar consumption
- Laundry bills

If the late charges reach the front desk after the guest has settled his/her bill and has checked out, the hotel will have to bear the loss. In order to reduce the losses due to the late arrival of charges, the cashier should confirm with all the points of sale about any outstanding charges for the departing guest and also enquire about the mini-bar consumption from the guest before preparing the master bill.

In manual hotel operation, the front office follows the given procedure to prepare a guest's bills

- Prepare bills in duplicate.

- Check the room number.
- Take out the guest folio.
- Calculate the correct number of room nights and make sure that whether a late check-out charge is to be added.
- Enter the guest's credit transactions in the master bill in the order of their occurrence.
- Enter the method of payment (cash, credit/debit card, bill to company, etc.).
- Present the bills, along with supporting vouchers, to the guest for review.
- Once the guest has verified the charges and made the payment, give the first copy of the bill to the guest.
- File the second copy in the night auditor's file.

Determination of mode of payment: The method is established during registration or even before, at the reservation stage. The methods of payments of bills may be cash-in local and foreign currency; cash equivalents such as demand draft, traveler's cheque, and debit card; or through credit modes such as charge card, credit card, travel agent vouchers, and corporate billings. The front desk generally aware of the mode of settlement of bills. This information helps the front desk cashier to do the necessary verification in case of credit payments or take Authorization from superiors in case the bill is to be settled by personal cheque, which is normally not entertained by most of the hotels.

Receiving payment: The guest reviews the bill and makes the payment in the pre decided mode. The payment may be made through currency notes, traveler's cheque, personal cheque, demand draft, debit card, credit card, charge card, travel agent voucher, and bill to the company. The front desk cashier follows the house policy in collecting the payment from the guest.

Marketing activity: Since the guest and the hotel staff come face-to-face for the last time at the check-out stage, the front office should use this opportunity for marketing efforts in the following ways:

- The front desk should ask the guests about their experience at the hotel and ask them to fill in a feedback form.
- If the guests have any complaints, the front desk should note the same and assure the guests of a quick resolution.
- The front desk agent should inform the guest about the upcoming special offers.
- The front desk agent may suggest for making a future reservation for the guest's return trip or for a hotel in the same chain at the guest's next destination.

Communicating departure to all departments: The front desk informs all departments about the departure of a guest to ensure smooth operation of the hotel. The points of sale will not offer credit facility to guests who have already settled their bills and politely ask them to make a direct payment. The housekeeping department will perform the following tasks:

- Prepare the room for the next guest.
- Block the room for special cleaning processes, like spring cleaning.
- Look for maintenance requirements in the room.
- Refurnish the room for future sales.

To ensure proper room management, both front office and housekeeping must inform each other of the change in room status. Once a guest checks out, the front office must inform the housekeeping, so that the latter cleans the room and makes it available for sale. A flow of information in the reverse direction is equally necessary. The housekeeping prepares the housekeeping report at the end of a shift, which indicates the housekeeping status of each room-***whether rooms are ready for occupation, under repair, or out of order***. The housekeeping department uses room status codes to indicate the status of rooms. This report is sent to the front office, where it is compared with the front office occupancy report and the discrepancies are sorted out. The close coordination between the front office and

housekeeping keeps the room status information up-to-date, leading to the maximum benefit to the hotel.

Updating front office records: When the guests depart from a hotel, the rooms they had been occupying become vacant. The front desk agent should update the hotel records related to the room status at the earliest so that the rooms can be sold again. The front office should also update the GHCs for marketing and research purposes.

Room status records: Once a guest checks out, the front desk agent updates the following records related to the status of the room:

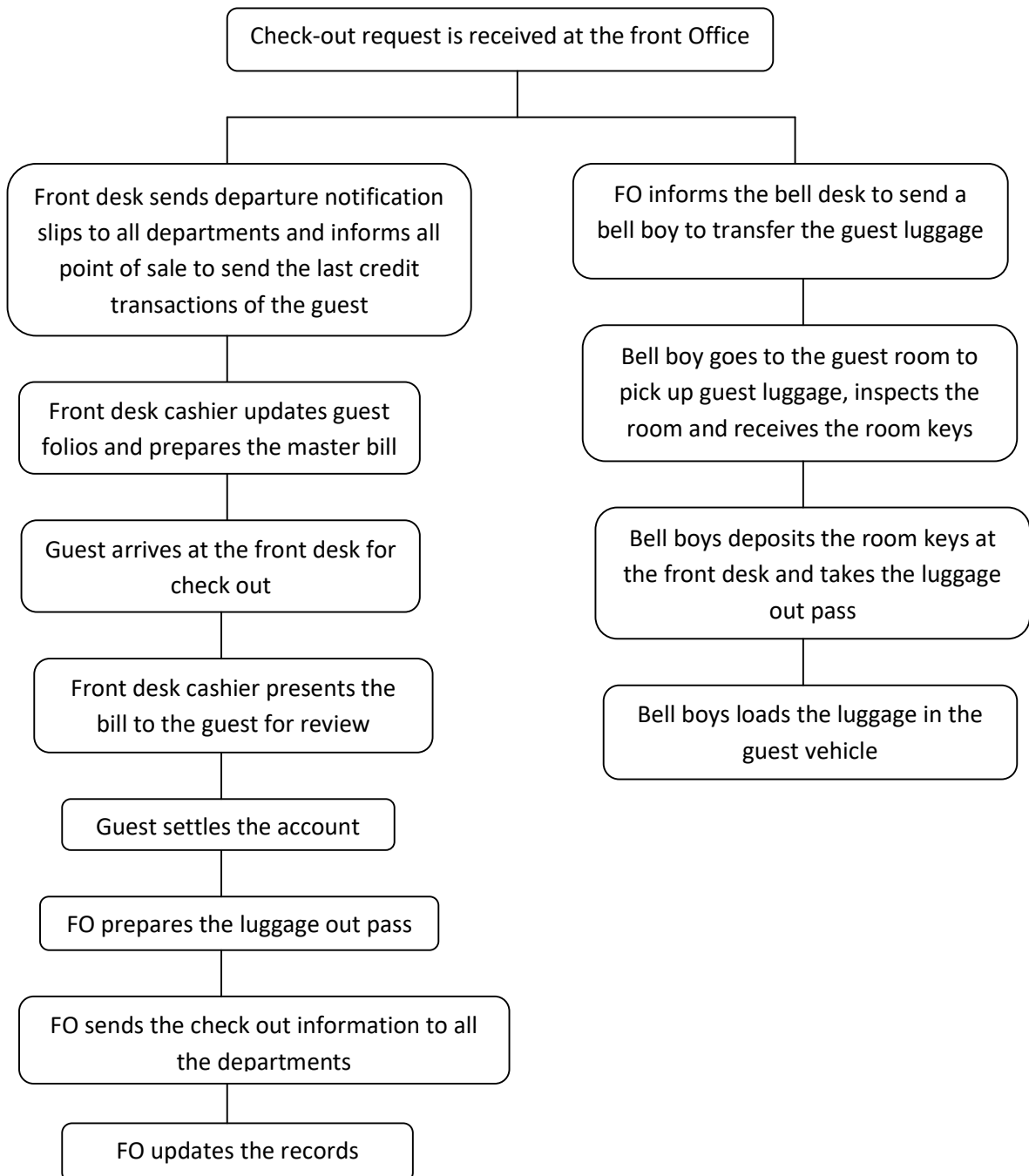
- The front office removes the name of the guest from the room rack at the information desk, so that the room shows as vacant and can be allotted to another guest.
- The front desk changes the status of the room in the front office occupancy from occupied to vacant/dirty, so that the room can be cleaned and made ready for report another guest.

Guest history card: most hotels maintain a record of their guests, with details such as previous arrival and departure dates, type of room and rate charged likes and dislikes of the guests, the amount spent by them, and any special requests. This record is known as the guest history card or GHC. Hotels also prepare the GHCs of corporate clients. A GHC serves the following purposes:

- It provides current marketing data.
- The demographical data of the guest-age, sex, income, occupation, marital etc. helps to develop new marketing strategies.
- The knowledge of the guest's personal likes and dislikes help in serving the guest better. The information in GHC reveals the frequency of a guest's visits. If the guest is frequent user of the hotel, his/her name may be entered

in the frequent users' list and promotional offers and special rates may be offered to him/her.

Departure Procedure



Departure Procedure in Fully Automated Systems

The departure procedure in a hotel running on a fully automated and more efficient. It involves the following steps:

- The check-out request is received at the front desk or bell desk.
- The front desk sends a bellboy to transfer luggage from the guest room to the lobby.
- The front desk informs all points of sale and other departments of the hotel about the departing guest through the interlinked computer network.
- Since all the points of sale terminals are interlinked, any credit transaction of the guest instantaneously gets added in the guest folio.
- The front desk prepares the master bill by selecting the bill option of the cashier module.
- The front office presents the master bill, along with the supporting vouchers to the guest for review.
- The payment is received from the guest as per the predetermined mode of payment.
- The front office prepares the luggage out pass. The front desk communicates the departure of the guest to the housekeeping and all the other concerned departments.

The front office records are updated automatically, which include the following:

- The auto removal of the name of the departed guest from the in-house guest name list.
- The automatic updating of the current room status-from occupied to vacant/dirty.
- The automatic updating of the guest history card.

Express Check out Procedure

