STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Hotel Guest Complaint Handling SOP

Document no.	SOP-HTL-008
Revision	1.0
Owner	Front Office Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To resolve guest complaints promptly and fairly, turning a service failure into an opportunity to keep the guest's business and improve the property.

2. Scope

Applies to any employee who receives a guest complaint in person, by phone or in writing, and to managers approving service recovery gestures.

Definitions

Service recovery	The action taken to make a guest whole after a service failure, such as an apology, a fee waiver or a room upgrade.
Compensation authority	The maximum value of a service recovery gesture an employee can approve without manager sign-off.
Escalation	Passing a complaint to a manager because it exceeds an employee's authority or the guest remains unsatisfied.

3. Responsibilities

Front Desk Agent	Receives complaints, resolves issues within their compensation authority, and escalates when needed.
Front Office Manager	Handles escalated complaints, approves larger service recovery gestures, and reviews complaint trends.
Department Head	Addresses complaints specific to their department, such as housekeeping or food and beverage.

RACI matrix

Activity	Front Desk Agent	Front Office Manager	Department Head
Receive and acknowledge the complaint	R/A	I	I
Resolve within compensation authority	R/A	I	C
Approve service recovery above authority	R	A	C

Activity	Front Desk Agent	Front Office Manager	Department Head
Follow up with the guest after resolution	R	A	I

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Complaint log or app
- Compensation authority chart by role
- Guest contact information from the PMS
- Service recovery gesture options list

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Listen without interrupting** Let the guest fully explain the issue without interrupting or becoming defensive, giving them your full attention.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.2	**Acknowledge and apologize** Acknowledge the guest's frustration and offer a sincere apology for the experience, without placing blame on another department in front of the guest.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.3	**Ask clarifying questions** Ask enough questions to fully understand the issue, such as the room number, timing and what outcome the guest is hoping for.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.4	**Check the compensation authority chart** Check what level of service recovery you are authorized to offer for the type of issue before proposing a resolution to the guest. **Checkpoint:** The proposed resolution matches the employee's compensation authority for that issue type.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.5	**Propose a resolution** Offer a specific resolution within your authority, such as a fee adjustment, amenity or room change, and confirm the guest is satisfied with it.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.6	**Escalate when needed** If the issue is outside your authority or the guest remains unsatisfied, escalate to the front office manager or relevant department head right away rather than letting the guest wait. **Warning:** Never promise a resolution you are not authorized to approve; escalate instead.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.7	**Coordinate with the relevant department** Contact the department connected to the complaint, such as housekeeping for a cleanliness issue, so the root cause is fixed as well as the guest being compensated.	Department Head	☐
5.8	**Approve service recovery above authority** Review escalated complaints and approve a service recovery gesture appropriate to the issue, balancing guest satisfaction with cost.	Front Office Manager	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.9	**Confirm the resolution with the guest** Circle back to the guest to confirm the agreed resolution has been carried out, such as a credit appearing on the folio or a room being fixed. **Checkpoint:** The guest confirms the resolution was carried out before the complaint is closed.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.10	**Log the complaint and resolution** Record the complaint, root cause, resolution and compensation given in the complaint log for tracking and trend analysis.	Front Desk Agent	☐
5.11	**Follow up after the stay** For a serious complaint, follow up with the guest after checkout to confirm they left satisfied and to invite them back.	Front Office Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every complaint is logged with the issue, resolution and compensation given.
- Resolutions offered stay within the employee's compensation authority or are escalated.
- Guests confirm the agreed resolution was carried out before the complaint is closed.
- Complaint trends are reviewed regularly to identify recurring root causes.

7. Records

- Complaint log or app entries
- Compensation authority chart
- Service recovery cost tracking
- Post-stay follow-up notes

8. KPIs

- Complaint resolution time
- Percentage of complaints resolved at first contact
- Repeat complaint rate for the same guest
- Guest satisfaction score after service recovery

9. Common mistakes

- Interrupting the guest before they finish explaining the issue.
- Promising a resolution outside the employee's compensation authority.
- Blaming another department in front of the guest.
- Closing the complaint in the log without confirming the guest is satisfied.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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