

FRONT OFFICE · OPERATING STANDARD 109

The Group Arrival Standard

WHO

Front office, bell desk, guest relations and the duty manager

WHEN

Every arrival or departure of ten rooms or more travelling together

YOU NEED

The final rooming list, key envelopes, luggage tags, a room or corner set apart

TIME TO TRAIN

60 minutes, with one group arrival walked through on site

What this standard achieves

A group checks in and leaves quickly in its own space, with every key, bag and question handled by named staff, while the guests already in the hotel keep their lobby, their desk and their quiet. The group leader has one contact for the whole stay and never has to look for the next person to ask.

Measured by

01 Rooming list checked against the PMS 48 hours before arrival

02 Key envelopes ready 2 hours before the coach

03 One member of staff named as the group's contact

04 Group checked in away from the main desk, in its own area

05 One main desk station kept free for other guests

06 Every group bag tagged with a room or surname at the coach

07 Group bags out of the lobby within 15 minutes

08 Bags in rooms within 45 minutes of the coach arriving

09 Departure bags held in the luggage room, never the lobby

10 Extras settled room by room before the coach leaves

PHASE 1

Plan with the leader

STEPS 1–5

01 48 hours before arrival, check the final rooming list against the PMS line by line: names, room types, bed set-ups, shares, children, access needs and dietary notes. Send every difference to the group coordinator that day.

02 Call the group leader or tour manager to agree the coach arrival time, the number of guests and bags, who pays for what (master bill or each room), meal times, and one mobile number for the stay.

"Mr Novak, may I confirm the coach for 15:30, with 38 guests and about 45 bags?"

03 Name one person as the group's contact for the whole stay, from guest relations or the front office, and give the leader that person's name and direct line.

04 Plan the space: a meeting room, a lounge corner or a covered terrace for check-in, a coach stop away from the main door if the drive allows, and a route for bags to the service lift.

05 24 hours before, send the plan in writing to housekeeping, the bell desk, security, the restaurant and the duty manager: arrival time, rooms in order of priority, and the staff needed at the coach.

PHASE 2

Prepare the keys

STEPS 6–10

06 Block the group's rooms and ask housekeeping to release them in floor order. Rooms for guests with access needs, small children or an early start the next day come first.

07 Two hours before the coach, prepare one envelope per room: two keys, the guests' names, the room number written inside, breakfast hours, the Wi-Fi and the contact's name. Sort them by surname.

08 Pre-fill the registration cards with what the hotel already holds, so each guest only signs and shows ID. Where the law allows, take passport details from the leader in advance, by a secure link.

09 Set up the check-in area 30 minutes before: a table per agent, the envelopes, water and a soft welcome drink, a sign with the group's name, and chairs for anyone tired.

10 Brief the team in the area 15 minutes before the coach: who meets it, who checks in, who takes the bags, and who stays at the main desk.

PHASE 3

Meet the coach

STEPS 11–15

- 11 Check yourself against The Presence Standard before the coach arrives: uniform, name badge, and the leader's name and the group's name in mind.
- 12 Meet the leader at the coach door before the guests step down. Confirm the head count and any change since the call, and agree the order: guests to the check-in area, bags to the bell team.
"Welcome, Mr Novak. Everything is ready in the Garden Room. May I take your guests straight through?"
- 13 One member of staff leads the group to the check-in area by the shortest route, walking at the front, while another stays at the main door to greet other arriving guests as usual.
"Welcome to [hotel name]. Please follow me to the Garden Room, where your keys are ready."
- 14 Tag every bag with the room number or surname as it leaves the coach. Count them aloud against the leader's number and note any difference before the coach drives away.
- 15 Move the bags on trolleys straight to the service corridor or the luggage room, never stacked in the lobby. The lobby is clear of group bags within 15 minutes of the coach arriving.

PHASE 4

Check in apart

STEPS 16–20

- 16 In the check-in area, the leader calls each room in turn; the agent hands over the envelope, checks ID, takes the signature and a card for extras, in under 2 minutes per room.
- 17 Keep the room number inside the envelope, and give each guest two facts: when and where breakfast is served, and when their bags will be in the room.
"Your room number is inside, Mrs Tanaka. Breakfast is from 07:00 on the terrace, and your bags will be up within 45 minutes."
- 18 Keep one station at the main desk staffed and free for other guests during the whole group arrival. No group guest checks in at the main desk while the group area is open.
- 19 Write in the PMS every request heard at the table (a cot, a pillow, an allergy, a birthday) and send it to the department before the area is cleared.
- 20 For rooms not yet ready, give a time checked with housekeeping, store hand luggage and offer the lounge, as The Early Arrival Standard sets out.

PHASE 5

Bags to the rooms

STEPS 21–23

- 21 Bell attendants deliver floor by floor in the service lift only, with every bag in its room within 45 minutes of the coach arriving. A bag without a readable tag goes to the bell desk, never to a guess.
- 22 At an occupied room, knock and announce the bell desk, wait and repeat before entering, as The Door Standard sets out. Place cases on the rack and leave.
- 23 Report the last bag delivered to the group contact, who tells the leader and clears the check-in area within 15 minutes of the last guest leaving it.

PHASE 6

During the stay

STEPS 24–25

- 24 Each evening the contact gives the leader the next day's times confirmed by the hotel: breakfast, meals, the coach, and any room change. One message, read back by the leader.
- 25 Seat group meals in their own room or section, and pass the group's requests through the contact, so the rest of the hotel keeps its usual rhythm.

PHASE 7

Send them off

STEPS 26–30

- 26 The evening before departure, agree with the leader the bag collection time, the coach time and how extras are paid. Print each room's extras folio for the morning.
"Shall we collect the bags from 07:00 for the 09:00 coach, Mr Novak?"
- 27 Collect bags from the rooms floor by floor at the agreed time, tag and count them, and hold them in the luggage room or load them on the coach, never in the lobby.
- 28 Settle each room's extras at a table in the group area from 60 minutes before the coach, and the master bill with the leader. The main desk stays free for other check-outs.
- 29 Load the coach with the leader present, count the bags against the arrival count, and check the luggage room is empty of the group's bags before the coach leaves.
- 30 Within 24 hours, write a short group report: arrival and departure times, any problem, and requests to keep for the next visit. Send it to the group coordinator and to sales.

What to record

Before arrival

- ☐ Rooming list checked against the PMS
- ☐ Coach time and guest count
- ☐ Leader's name and mobile
- ☐ Group contact named

Rooms and keys

- ☐ Rooms released, in priority order
- ☐ Envelopes ready, with the time
- ☐ Rooms not ready on arrival

Bags

- ☐ Bag count at the coach
- ☐ Tags matched to rooms
- ☐ Lobby clear, with the time
- ☐ Last bag delivered, with the time

Guests

- ☐ Requests heard at the table
- ☐ Allergies and access needs
- ☐ Birthdays and occasions in the group

Billing

- ☐ Master bill or each room
- ☐ Card taken for extras
- ☐ Extras settled room by room

Departure

- ☐ Bag collection time agreed
- ☐ Bag count against the arrival
- ☐ Coach left, with the time

When the situation changes

The coach is over an hour late

Call the leader for a new time and keep the area set. Send staff back to other duties until 15 minutes before, and tell housekeeping, the restaurant and the duty manager.

Two groups arrive within an hour

Use two separate areas with one contact each, and deliver bags floor by floor in turn. If staff are short, the duty manager decides which group is served first.

A guest is missing from the list

Check them in at the group area with a room from the hotel's spare stock, with the rate confirmed with the leader before the key is given.

A queue forms at the main desk

The group contact sends one agent from the group area back to the main desk at once. Other guests are never kept waiting because of the group.

A guest in the group wants their own bill

Open a separate folio for that room's extras and take a card. The room charge stays on the master bill as agreed with the leader.

The bags arrive on a separate van

Agree its time with the leader, take the bags in through the service entrance, and tell each guest at the table when their bags will reach the room.

Common mistakes

MISTAKE

Checking the group in at the main desk because it is quicker to set up. Every other arriving guest queues behind forty passports.

MISTAKE

Stacking the bags against the lobby wall "just for twenty minutes". The lobby becomes a luggage room in front of every guest walking through.

MISTAKE

Making the envelopes from the leader's list without checking it against the PMS. Couples get twin beds and a family gets one room.

MISTAKE

Handing all the envelopes to the leader to give out. Nobody checks ID, and the hotel no longer knows who sleeps in which room.

MISTAKE

Sending forty bags up in the guest lifts. Arriving guests wait in the lobby while the lifts carry suitcases.

MISTAKE

Leaving the extras for the morning of departure at the main desk. Thirty folios meet the coach time and everyone else's check-out.

Check your team

After training (60 minutes, with one group arrival walked through on site), each person answers these without the sheet.

- 01 When is the rooming list checked, and against what?
- 02 What goes into each key envelope, and how are the envelopes sorted?
- 03 Where do group bags go from the coach, and within how long is the lobby clear?
- 04 What does the main desk keep for other guests while a group checks in?
- 05 Which lift do group bags use, and why?
- 06 What do you agree with the leader the evening before departure?

The Group Arrival Clock

Who does what from two days before the coach to the last bag in a room. Change the times if your hotel's differ, then keep them.

When	Who	What happens
48 hours before	Front office	Rooming list checked against the PMS
24 hours before	Group contact	Plan sent to every department
2 hours before	Front office	Key envelopes ready, sorted by surname
30 minutes before	Bell captain	Check-in area set, team briefed
Coach arrives	Bell team	Bags tagged, counted, out of the lobby in 15 min
First 45 minutes	Bell team	Every bag in its room, by the service lift
Evening before leaving	Group contact	Bag time, coach time and extras agreed

How to use this with your team

Brief it the day before every group arrival, one row for each person responsible. After the group leaves, the duty manager writes the real times beside each row, and the team fixes the slowest row before the next group.

Part of the DolceVita Standards Library: free operating standards for every department of the hotel, at dolcevitahospitality.com/free-resources.