

Reservations

The Cancellation Standard

Five steps for the guest who calls to cancel or change. Handled calmly, many become a stay on other dates, and the room is back on sale within the hour.

Who	When	You need
Reservations agents; the duty manager for any waiver	Every request to cancel, shorten or move a booking	The booking and its rate rules, the cancellation policy, waitlist
Measured by Reason asked once, never argued · Cancellation number sent within one hour · Room released within the same hour		

1 Find the terms

Open the booking and read its rate rules before answering anything. Thank the guest for letting you know, and say in the first minute whether cancelling is free or charged.

"Thank you for calling, Mrs Novak. Your rate is flexible, so cancelling today has no charge at all."

Common mistake Talking for five minutes before checking the rate. The guest assumes a charge is coming and turns defensive.

2 Ask once

Ask the reason once, gently, and accept the answer. If it is a change of plans rather than a change of mind, offer to move the stay to other dates on the same rate before you cancel anything.

"May I ask what changed? If it's only the dates, I can look at September for you on the same terms."

Common mistake Pushing the new dates a second time. The guest hears a salesperson and wants to end the call.

3 Explain the charge

If a charge applies, say the amount and the rule behind it once, plainly, without apology or argument. Exceptional cases (illness, a death, a cancelled flight) go to the duty manager the same day.

"The prepaid first night, €520, is charged. I'll ask my manager about your flight and call you by four."

Common mistake Waiving the fee out of the agent's own sympathy. The next guest in the same situation is charged, and both of them talk.

4 Confirm in writing

Within one hour, email the cancellation number, the original dates, any amount charged or refunded and when it reaches the card. Read the number aloud before ending the call.

"Your cancellation number is C-7714. Any refund reaches your card within five to ten working days."

Common mistake Cancelling in the PMS and sending nothing. A month later the guest disputes a charge, and neither side has proof.

5 Release the room

Within the same hour, release the room, check the waitlist for those dates, and cancel anything linked to the stay: restaurant tables, spa slots, transfers. Note the reason in the guest profile.

Profile note: "Cancelled 2 May, father unwell. Offered September. Warm tone; welcome back if rebooks."

Common mistake Leaving the airport transfer booked. The driver waits at arrivals for a guest who cancelled three weeks ago.

Cancel or Change: What to Offer

Not every cancellation is the same call. Each row is a reason guests give, what to offer first, and what follows if they still want to cancel.

The guest says	Offer first	Then
"Our plans have changed."	The same rate on new dates	Cancel if no date works
"We found it cheaper."	Compare like for like, on screen	Cancel without argument
"Someone is unwell."	Sympathy, then the duty manager	A call back the same day
"Our flight was cancelled."	New dates, or the manager's decision	Ask for the airline's notice
"We'll stay one night less."	Check the rate rules for a shorter stay	Reprice and reconfirm in writing
"Just cancel it, please."	Nothing. Cancel straight away.	Number and email within the hour

How to use this with your team

Read two rows at Monday's briefing and act them out in pairs. Through the week, agents note in the log which row each cancellation matched. The reservations manager reviews the notes on Friday.

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