

Reservations

The Waitlist Standard

Five steps for the caller who wants dates the hotel has sold out. A waitlist kept in someone's inbox is a promise nobody will remember to keep.

Who	When	You need
Reservations agents and the reservations manager	Every request for a room type or a date that is full	Availability for nearby dates and rooms, the PMS waitlist
Measured by Two alternatives before the waitlist · Waitlist kept in the PMS, not an inbox · Guest told the outcome by a set date		

1 Say it straight

Tell the guest in the first sentence that the dates or the room are full, then move straight to what you can offer. No long apology, and no account of how busy the hotel is.

"The sea-view rooms are full on those nights, Mr Mensah, but there are two things I can offer you."

Common mistake "We're completely sold out, it's our busiest week of the year." The guest hears a closed door and nothing behind it.

2 Offer two

Offer two alternatives before you mention a waitlist: the same room on the nearest free dates, or a different room on the same dates. Describe the other room in one specific sentence.

"The garden-view room is free those nights: the same size, quieter, with a balcony over the olive trees."

Common mistake Offering only the waitlist. The guest is left holding a maybe, and books a certain room somewhere else.

3 Enter it properly

If the guest wants to wait, enter them on the PMS waitlist with dates, room type, rate, contact details and their place in line. Never in a notebook, never in an email folder.

PMS waitlist: "Mensah, 2 adults, 9-12 Aug, sea view, flexible rate, 3rd in line, mobile preferred."

Common mistake Keeping the waitlist on a sticky note at your desk. You are off on the day the room frees up.

4 Give a date

Tell the guest how the waitlist works and the date by which you will call, whatever the outcome. If they want to hold another booking meanwhile, that is their choice; say so plainly.

"If a room frees up I'll call you straight away, and either way you'll hear from me by 1 July."

Common mistake "We'll let you know if anything comes up." Nothing does, nobody calls, and the guest decides they were forgotten.

5 Work the list

Each morning, check cancellations against the waitlist in order. Call the first guest within one hour of a room freeing up, hold it for four hours, then move to the next name.

"Mr Mensah, a sea-view room has freed up for 9 to 12 August. I can hold it for you until 15:00 today."

Common mistake Releasing a cancelled room online before checking the list. A stranger gets the room the waiting guest asked for.

The Waitlist Morning Check

Ten minutes each morning, before last night's cancellations go back on sale. One agent works the list in order and signs it.

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| ☐ Overnight cancellations and changes printed | ☐ Next name called once the hold expires |
| ☐ Each freed date matched against the waitlist | ☐ Booked guests removed from the waitlist |
| ☐ Guests called in order, nobody skipped | ☐ Today's promised call-by dates checked |
| ☐ Call made within one hour of the room freeing | ☐ Guests whose dates have passed told the outcome |
| ☐ Room held four hours for the guest called | ☐ Rooms released online only after the list |
| ☐ No answer: message left and email sent | ☐ Sheet signed by the agent and the manager |

How to use this with your team

Give the check to the first agent on the morning shift and write their name on the rota. At Monday's briefing the manager reads out last week's waitlist bookings and any guest not called by their date.

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