

Concierge

The Alternatives Standard

Five steps for the moment the answer is no. Sold out or closed, the guest still leaves the desk with two real options, and with no promise the desk can't keep.

Who	When	You need
Concierges and anyone answering requests at the desk	Any request that cannot be met as asked	The local shortlist, venues' direct lines, the waiting-list log
Measured by Two alternatives given with every no · No result promised before it is confirmed · Callbacks made by the time promised		

1 Try first

Before saying no, make two real attempts: call the venue directly, not the booking site, and ask for the waiting list or a cancellation slot. Tell the guest you are trying and when you will know.

"Let me call them directly before we decide anything, Ms Rossi. I'll have an answer within ten minutes."

Common mistake Checking the website, seeing "fully booked" and saying no. Venues keep back tables that never reach the online system.

2 Say it plainly

When it is a no, say so in the first sentence, with the reason in five words or fewer. Then move straight to what you can offer. Apologise once, not three times.

"I'm sorry, Ms Rossi, the opera is sold out tonight. Here is what I can offer instead."

Common mistake Circling the answer for a minute before giving it. The guest hears the no long before you say it, and waits for you to finish.

3 Offer two

Give two alternatives from your own knowledge, each of a different kind: the same thing at another time, or something else tonight. Say why each one fits what the guest asked for.

"There are stalls seats on Thursday, or tonight a chamber concert in the church 200 metres away, at 21:00."

Common mistake Offering five options to look helpful. The guest now has to do the choosing that the desk was supposed to do.

4 Promise the effort

Never say a waiting list will work out. Give the honest odds and the time you will call back. If the result is not certain, promise the effort and the time, never the outcome.

"You're third on the waiting list. I can't promise a table, but I will call you by 18:00 either way."

Common mistake Saying "leave it with me, it'll be fine" to end the conversation. Now the guest has plans built on a table that doesn't exist.

5 Follow through

Call back at the time you said, even with no news. Log every refused request and what you offered in the profile and the desk log. If a request is refused three times in a month, tell the head concierge.

"Opera sold out 3 times this month. Ask the box office about a hotel allocation for Fridays."

Common mistake Staying silent because there is nothing new. The guest checks their phone all afternoon and stops trusting the desk.

When the Answer Is No

Every no has two answers ready: the same thing at another time, or something different now. These are examples; replace them with real places in your city.

Request	Same thing, other time	Something else, now
Table at a full restaurant	Same restaurant, lunch tomorrow	Bar counter at a nearby venue, 21:30
Sold-out concert	Same show, a later date	A smaller concert nearby, same evening
Museum closed today	First entry tomorrow, booked now	A private gallery open until 19:00
Boat trip cancelled by wind	First slot when the wind drops	A drive along the coast by car
No car free at 18:00	The same car at 18:30	A licensed taxi booked for 18:00
Tour full in English	English group on another day	A private guide for a shorter tour

How to use this with your team

At each morning briefing, take one row and replace the examples with real names from your shortlist. By the end of the week the desk has six answers ready. Add a row whenever a request is refused twice.

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