



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1: OPERATIONS · INTRODUCTORY MODULE: THE CRAFT · LESSON 1

Before the Guest: The Locker, the Uniform and the Attitude

*Service doesn't start at the counter.
It starts at the staff entrance.*

In five lines

This school's first lesson doesn't happen in front of the guest: it happens before — in how you arrive, how you look after your locker, the changing room and the staff canteen, how you put on a uniform that represents not just you but an entire institution, and what you decide to leave locked away before you walk through the door. Because on the other side there is someone who spent a long time saving to live these days with their family, and your profession — ours — is to be part of those moments. That demands coming in every day with the right attitude: giving your highest professional level — within your working hours, your duties and the resources available — whether anyone is watching or not. Everything else you are about to learn depends on this attitude.

The script, step by step

- 1. Be on time and arrive fully present.** Whoever comes in running serves running for the whole shift. Changing, getting ready and taking the handover are work, and the hotel schedules them within working hours — your part is to plan your arrival so you can do them calmly, without giving minutes away or borrowing them from the day. Calm punctuality is the first gesture of respect: to the colleague waiting for you to relieve them, and to yourself, because you deserve to start fully present.
- 2. Staff areas: that's where your responsibility begins.** Your locker tidy, the changing room in order, the staff canteen table left the way you'd like to find it. Whoever leaves the canteen in a mess is telling everyone who they are before they've even put on the uniform. Backstage is the rehearsal for the stage: whoever doesn't respect the space they share with their colleagues won't truly respect the guest's.
- 3. The uniform: you are putting on an institution.** When you button it up you stop being only you: you represent the whole hotel, with its history and that of everyone who keeps it going. It is worn with the neatness you already know — during service and in the professional areas where a guest might see you. Outside your working hours, your life is yours: the uniform represents the hotel while you are on duty; it does not turn your free time into an extension of the house.
- 4. The locker keeps your world.** Money, your personal phone, the argument at home, the worry you bring with you: under lock and key until you leave. Not because they don't matter — they do, a lot — but because in there are families who have saved for a year for this week, and that week is not to blame for your day. When you leave, your world will be waiting for you where you left it. And if what you're carrying is truly heavy, don't carry it in silence: tell your manager — lesson 45 will teach you to tell a bad day you can manage from a problem that must be reported.
- 5. Attitude: your highest level, watched or not.** It makes no difference whether the general manager, the shift leader or nobody at all is watching you: the level is the same — within your working hours, your duties and the resources available — because the standard isn't for the one watching you; it's for the one visiting you. This is the decision made every morning at the locker, and it is what separates a job from a profession.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Decent changing rooms or staff canteen	The team looks after what is shared — agreed order, mutual respect, leaving it better than they found it — but that care does not replace the company's obligation to provide and maintain adequate, decent and safe facilities. The shortfall is reported through the established channel and must be corrected: a temporary fix does not make a structural shortcoming acceptable.
Your own locker	A safe space for personal belongings is a condition of the job, not a favor: if there isn't one, request it through the established channel; the company must resolve it. While it is being fixed, a temporary, supervised place serves as a bridge — as a bridge, not as the norm. What you lock away isn't the object — it's the line between your world and your service.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Walk through the staff entrance with everything put away, an immaculate uniform and the right attitude on — every day, at the same level.	Bring your personal phone or private conversations into guest areas. Go out with a careless uniform where you can be seen. Wear your bad day like a flag down the corridors.	Speak badly of the hotel, a colleague or a guest where a guest might hear you — with the uniform on, your voice is the voice of the house. And never decide that "I'm not up for anyone today": the person in there saved too much to be met with that.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Arriving at the exact minute and changing in a rush: a shift that starts in a scramble never straightens out — it drags.
- ◆ Treating staff areas as no man's land: they are the real X-ray of a team — we general managers look at them before the lobby.
- ◆ Neglecting the uniform in professional areas where a guest can see you: while you are on duty, your appearance is the visible voice of the house — and off duty, the house no longer speaks for you, nor you for it.
- ◆ Locking away the phone but not the mind: the real locker is mental — and when locking it away isn't enough, lesson 45 will teach you to ask for support in time.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“Service doesn't begin when the guest sees you.
It begins when you decide, at your locker, who is going to walk out that door.”**

This lesson's exercise

Describe your ideal start-of-shift routine, minute by minute, from the staff entrance to your first guest: what time you arrive, what you do in the changing room, what you lock in your locker (besides your belongings), what you check on your uniform and the inner phrase you carry as you walk through the door. Tomorrow, compare it with your real routine — the distance between the two is your first project in this school. In the answer that follows, I share mine.