



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1: OPERATIONS · MODULE 1: FRONT OFFICE · LESSON 5

# Check-In: The Paperwork, the Welcome and the Upgrade

*Everyone knows how to read a document and hand over a key.  
The craft is in the moments almost nobody executes.*

## In five lines

Check-in is the first long contact between the guest and the hotel: three to five minutes in which the attitude they will bring to their whole stay is decided. The paperwork is mandatory and doesn't set anyone apart. What does are five moments almost nobody executes in full: the name, the question that personalizes, the reconfirmation that secures the reservation, the honest upgrade offer and the farewell with your own name. This lesson turns check-in into a seven-step script that fits into the same three minutes.

## The script, step by step

- 1. Before they speak, it has already begun.** Eye contact and a smile as soon as you see them approaching, even if you are finishing with another guest. Nobody is invisible at your front desk.
- 2. The time-of-day greeting — and the open question.** “Welcome. How was your trip? Is this your first time with us?” The answer gives you the tone (tiredness, hurry, celebration) — and, when a preference comes up that is useful for serving them better, that one and only that one is recorded in the authorized system, as you will learn in lesson 16: tomorrow's personalization is born here, not from writing everything down.
- 3. MAGIC MOMENT — The name.** As soon as the reservation or the document gives it to you, use it: “Mr. Fernández, we're almost done.” The surname turns a transaction into a relationship. Twice; more than that sounds like a technique.
- 4. THE RECONFIRMATION — insurance for the stay.** With the reservation on screen, repeat it out loud: “Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez, you have a double room with garden views reserved, seven nights on half board — is that correct?” Twenty seconds that secure the entire stay: the guest confirms what they bought, and any error in how the reservation was transferred shows up now, at the front desk — not tomorrow, in the form of “this isn't the room I booked.”
- 5. HONEST UPSELLING — the upgrade only you know about.** They booked through a website and don't know the hotel's highlights; you are the one who knows them. Master your superior rooms and TODAY's availability, and offer it with a clear description and supplement: “Mr. López, as it happens, today I have a suite available with a living room and magnificent sea views; I can offer it to you for a supplement of only [X].” Telling them what you offer AND what it costs is what makes it an upgrade and not a surprise. The guest gains an experience; the hotel, results. Everybody wins — but only if you offer it.
- 6. The paperwork with your hands, the information in order of priority.** While you register them, today's essentials: breakfast, opening hours, Wi-Fi. Information that isn't needed today is noise; information that is needed and not given is a complaint tomorrow.
- 7. MAGIC MOMENT — The farewell that opens doors.** Hand over the key with a destination (“room 214, second floor, to the right of the elevator”) and, if you can, walk them there: a great hotel doesn't point the way, it walks it with you. And close with your name: “I'm [name]; for anything at all, I'm right here.” Giving them your name is giving them a host, not a front desk.

## With limited resources: how to hold the standard

| If you don't have...                    | How to hold the standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The system (a crash or a power outage)  | Paper registration with a template prepared in advance; the human script doesn't change a single step — reconfirmation included, reading from the guest's voucher or confirmation. Let them notice it in the lighting, never in the way they are treated. |
| Superior rooms available                | The upgrade offer adapts to the day's inventory: category, orientation, a quiet floor or a special touch of attention. There is always some upgrade you can offer; knowing which one is your job at the briefing.                                         |
| Time (a long line, a group checking in) | You cut the paperwork, never the moments: name, express reconfirmation ("double, garden view, seven nights, half board — correct?") and a farewell with your name fit into 90 seconds.                                                                    |

## In front of the guest

| DO                                                                                                                                                                        | DON'T                                                                                                                                                         | NEVER                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Talk to the guest, not to the computer. Reconfirm what they bought before registering them. State the upgrade with its price, in the same voice you use for good morning. | Recite the entire brochure. Offer the upgrade while hiding the supplement "so as not to scare them." Use the surname zero times or five (the measure is two). | Promise what doesn't depend on you in order to look good for 60 seconds. Register a guest without looking them in the face even once. Argue over a reservation discrepancy in front of the line: it is managed, not debated. |

## Common mistakes

- ◆ Skipping the reconfirmation: a reservation error detected at the front desk is an anecdote; discovered in the room, it is a complaint — and the kind that gets written.
- ◆ Offering the upgrade without the price: without a clear supplement it isn't upselling, it's an ambush. And not offering it is worse: it denies the guest an experience they don't know exists.
- ◆ Talking to the computer instead of the guest: the paperwork is done with your hands, the relationship with your eyes.
- ◆ Finishing without introducing yourself: a check-in without the front desk agent's own name is a hotel without a face.

### THE GOLDEN RULE

**"The paperwork is what you have to do.  
The reconfirmation, the upgrade and the welcome are what you decide to do. And  
what people remember is what you decided."**

## This lesson's exercise

Rewrite your complete check-in, incorporating this lesson's three safeguards: the reconfirmation of the reservation out loud, an upgrade offer with its description and a clear supplement, and the farewell with your name. Word for word, like a theater script. In the answer that follows, I share how I would do it.