

## ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

*Complete guide to*

# housekeeping

*Units of competency addressed in this publication:*

SITHACS004A	Provide housekeeping services to guests
SITHACS005A	Prepare rooms for guests
SITHACS006A	Clean premises and equipment
SITHACS007A	Launder linen and guest clothes
SITHACS008A	Provide valet service
SITXENV001A	Participate in environmentally sustainable work practices
PRSS0217A	Provide lost and found facility
SITHIND003A	Provide and coordinate hospitality service

## How to Use this Multimedia Resource



### **Disc icon:**

When you see this disc icon, go to your disc to access supporting information.

### **Book icon:**

When you see a book icon, go to your other Futura Training titles for more in-depth information on a related topic

### **Damage Control: Lost File**

At check-in, a guest handed over their gift voucher, detailing the inclusions for their stay. When the guest went to dinner, they were upset to find that they were being charged for the meal, even though it was included in their package.

### **Interest box:**

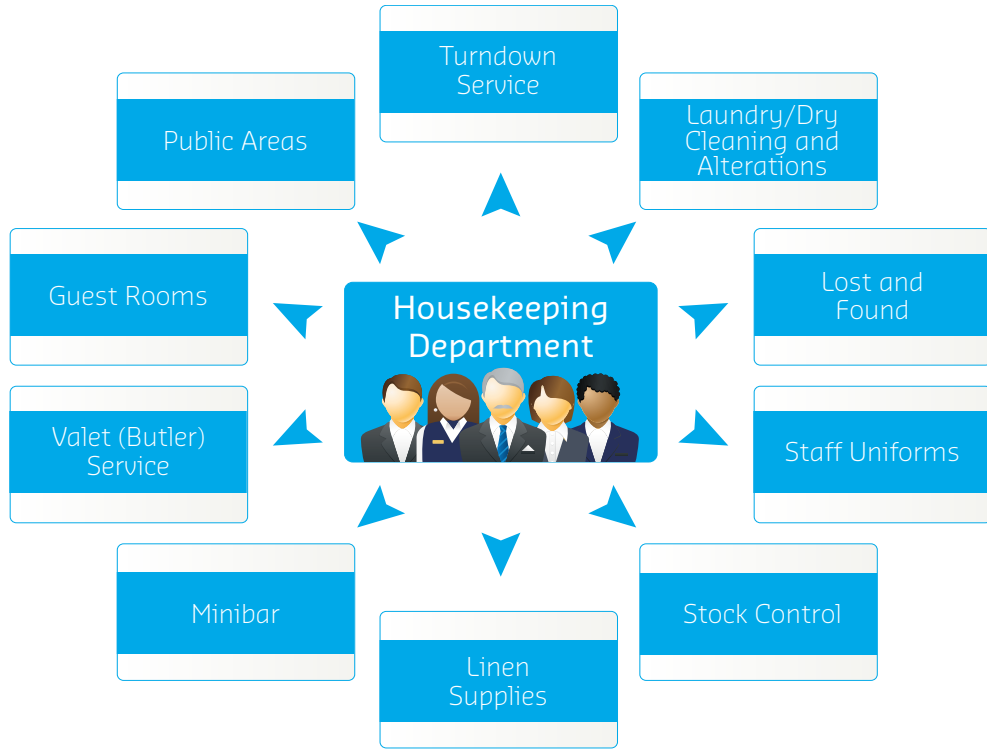
Damage Controls and Science Breaks provide extra interesting information and challenging situations. How would you handle these challenging, industry-sourced scenarios?





## SCOPE OF THE HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT

The Housekeeping department is commonly the largest department in an accommodation property and in many venues it is staffed 24 hours per day. Their scope of responsibility reaches further than just cleaning guest rooms and attending to guest requests. Here is a brief overview of the responsibilities of to the Housekeeping department.



### CLEANING GUEST ROOMS

One of the chief responsibilities of the Housekeeping department is the cleanliness and upkeep of guest rooms. Depending on the style of accommodation, rooms may be cleaned daily (sometimes twice a day), every few days or only after departure. It is important that clear communication is exchanged between Housekeeping and Front Office, so that rooms are prepared at appropriate times and to prevent unnecessary interruption to guests.

## WORKING SAFELY

The Housekeeping department is an area where staff are exposed to many potential workplace accidents and incidents. Employees are regularly exposed to chemicals, heavy lifting, repetitive tasks, electrical equipment and soiled or contaminated items.



Workplace accidents are preventable. It is therefore crucial, as well as a legal requirement, that employees are aware of their role in maintaining a safe and accident-free environment, through effective and on-going training, supervision and the provision of necessary tools, in order to be able to work in a safe manner.

Safe work practices include:

- Always adhering to the manufacturer's instructions
- Wearing protective clothing
  - Uniform
  - Rubber soled and covered shoes
  - Masks
  - Gloves
  - Aprons
  - Goggles/protective glasses
- Using chemicals correctly and safely
- Washing hands regularly
- Checking equipment prior to use
- Handling waste cautiously, e.g. using tongs
- Lifting safely and using mechanical aids when necessary
- Following instructions from supervisors
- Adhering to organisational policies and procedures
- Reporting any defects, incidents, accidents, near-misses or other breaches in safe work practices

It must be stressed that the work of Housekeeping impacts directly on the entire organisation. Careless behaviour could result in slip or trip hazards, skin irritations, spread of harmful bacteria, theft of valuable items, access of unauthorised persons and, even worse, fatal accidents such as electrocutions.



- Collecting all rubbish
- Removing room service trays and excess crockery/cutlery
- Stripping the bed
- Removing all linen/towelling
- Soaking dirty crockery and utensils in the sink (or placing in trolley to be taken to the scullery)
- Stacking and running the dishwasher (if applicable)
- Squirting toilet cleaner into the toilet bowl
- Repositioning furniture in the correct places



The practice of stripping rooms cuts down the number of trips taken to the trolley during the cleaning process. It also serves to identify any in-room discrepancies: broken furniture, maintenance issues, missing items, etc. These should be reported immediately, so that action to rectify the problem can be undertaken in ample time, prior to the arrival of the new guest.

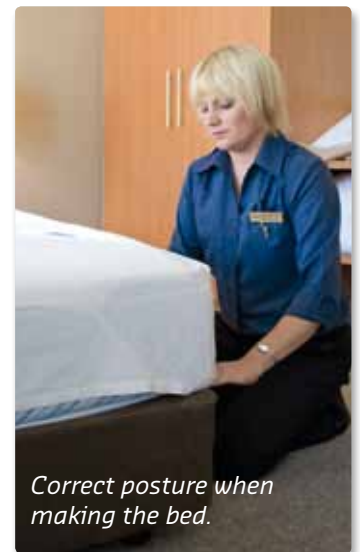
On hectic days, support staff (houseperson or supervisor) may assist and strip rooms on your behalf, once the occupant has departed. When the room is stripped bare of all unnecessary objects the cleaning process can commence.

### 3. CLEANING THE BEDROOM

The best place to start within the room is the bedroom and the first item to attend to is the bed. The bed is the focal point of the room and has a dramatic effect on the overall appearance of the room. It is imperative that the bed be prepared in a professional manner, taking care that the linen fitted is in good condition and free from rips or stains.

Special care must be taken when making beds as strong physical exertion and strain is placed on the body when bending over numerous beds throughout the day. Be cautious when moving beds as they are often heavy and cumbersome. Ideally, beds will be positioned on wheels for ease of manoeuvring. When moving the bed out from the wall, always crouch down, keeping your back straight, and pull the bed out carefully. Remember to never bend at the waist. To push the bed back into place use your legs or again, crouch down to protect your back.

The bed-making styles will differ depending on the star rating of the venue and the amount of linen used. In 5-star properties it is not uncommon for 3 sheets to be fitted to the bed. In 3-star venues only 2 sheets may be used.



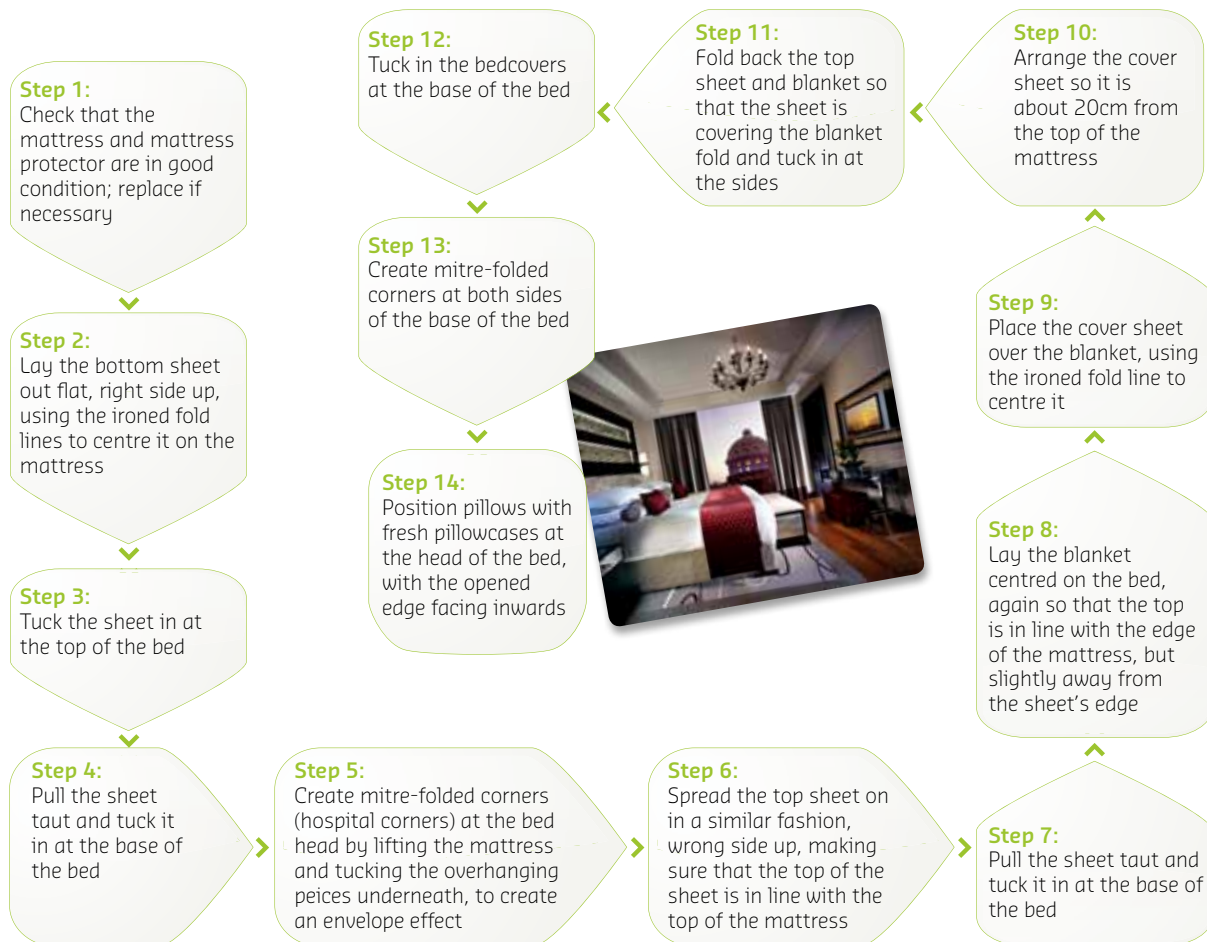
*Correct posture when making the bed.*

## Bed-Making Styles

Standard	Superior	European
Mattress protector	Mattress protector	Mattress protector
Bottom sheet	Bottom sheet	Bottom sheet
Top sheet	Top sheet	Duvet/doona
Blanket	Blanket	Duvet cover
Bedsread	Cover sheet	Pillow and pillowcases
Pillows and pillowcases	Pillows and pillowcases	

Decorative bedcovers will also be used, depending on the particular establishment, the climate and the targeted clientele. Bedcovers may range from a blanket, a bedspread (comforter or quilt), a duvet (doona) or a runner (a small half-bedsread positioned across the base of the bed). The frequency of their laundering will differ from venue to venue but should the bedspread be soiled or damaged, it should be immediately removed and replaced with a fresh one.

To make a bed it is important to start at the head of the bed and tuck linen in from the top. Here are the steps for making a bed:



Watch the video on the disc for a demonstration of how to make a bed.

**Low key** – It is necessary that employees remain in the background, conscientiously getting on with their tasks smoothly and quietly, yet being perceptive to attend to any tasks quickly. It is not unheard of that butlers let the guest take credit for their actions, simply to ‘keep the peace’.

**Organised** – The position requires an extremely well-organised person who can manage many people and situations concurrently. Most guests travel with strict time schedules which need to be adhered to diligently. Exceptional communication skills and punctuality are a must.

**Eager and resourceful** – The service industry is reliant on staff who have a positive attitude and a ‘can do’ approach. It is important that a butler takes pride in their work and shows great concern for the welfare of their guests. Equally important is that they have the motivation to please guests, such as by hunting down items that at first seem impossible to deliver.

**Meticulous** – Providing specialised, personal attention is at the forefront of any butler/valet service. It is usually their role to supervise and carry out the final check before the service is presented to the visitor. Hence, butlers must be extremely attentive to detail.

**Well presented** – It is also a requirement that staff be impeccably presented. Your appearance and demeanour directly contributes to the effectiveness of your communication. Due to the personalised nature of interactions, staff must ensure that they maintain exceptional personal hygiene standards. Hair and nails should be clean, trimmed and neat. Body odour should be kept in check with regular bathing and teeth brushing. Avoid using excessive fragrances (perfumes or aftershaves) as this will attract unnecessary attention. Clothing should be freshly laundered and pressed, with shoes polished and shiny.

The importance of grooming and behaviour cannot be over-stressed. It is almost as though you are an actor, playing the role of a butler. You should walk in a confident manner and at a pace appropriate to the task at hand. It is important not to slouch or place your hands in pockets. Be mindful of your speech, considering the pace, volume and pitch, choosing topics of conversation that are not going to offend. A person’s name is special to them, so always attempt to use it, or otherwise their correct salutation, e.g. Your Worship. A butler must remain unobtrusive and never overstep the mark. The relationship can be compromised if the relationship becomes too familiar.



### Example of a Label



Once the item is sealed and labelled, the details should be transferred into a **Lost Property Register**. This may be in the form of a manual log book, a Word or Excel document in the computer, or incorporated into the computerised property management system.

If the item is to be collected by the guest, then there should be a column for the guest to sign, as a record of having the lost item returned. The Comments/Action Taken column is a record of the date and time that the guest is contacted about a lost property item, or what was done regarding the item. The Posted COD Column is a record for when items are mailed by Cash On Delivery (**COD**) and should have the date and COD reference number recorded in it. The Discard Method column allows you to record the disposal method, such as donation to charity.

It is important to include as much detail as possible: date, specific location, number of items, colours, brands, etc. When guests attempt to reclaim items they are usually asked to describe their belongings in detail. Being specific here will reduce the need to physically sight the article before liaising with the guest.



## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AT HOTEL FUTURA

There are several aspects of accommodation operations which impact on the environment. Some aspects refer to the venue as a whole and the management practices and decisions that are made. Other aspects are particular to each department within an operation, as some issues affect the departments differently. Regardless of where improvements can be made, it is essential that all staff are focussed on minimising the negative impact of their work on the environment.



The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Green Globe Program recommends certain areas that accommodation operations should address. These include:

- Freshwater and wastewater control
- Energy conservation
- Waste management
- Hazardous substances
- Land use
- Building design
- Involvement of staff/customers/local communities in environmental concerns
- Developing partnerships for responsible development

## FRESHWATER AND WASTEWATER CONTROL

Water usage in Australia is of critical importance. As one of the driest continents on the planet, coupled with being in the midst of a severe, extended drought and declining water storage levels, water conservation is a serious concern for everyone. Australia's largest river system, the Murray-Darling is a pale shadow of its former self. Agricultural use has nearly drained lakes that feed the Darling River and very little water is reaching the lower lakes and the mouth of the Murray River.



## HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Many of the substances traditionally used in the Hospitality industry can be considered hazardous. In recent times, many of the especially hazardous substances have been removed or phased out, due to increased awareness and OH&S requirements. Cleaning agents, building materials and various forms of waste have been particularly damaging to health and the environment.

Due to the wide range of requirements and associated activities, Hospitality venues can use and produce many different types of hazardous substances. Some of the hazardous substances you may encounter in Hospitality include:

- Cleaning products, e.g. detergents, bleach, oven cleaner, floor polish
- Pool chemicals, e.g. chlorine, acids and bases
- Office products, e.g. toner, ink, liquid paper, batteries
- Paint and varnish
- Flammable substances, e.g. Sterno cooking fuel, oil
- Gardening chemicals, e.g. herbicides and pesticides
- Asbestos
- Fluorescent light fluid



Hazardous substances also pose serious environmental problems. When hazardous substances are dumped or flushed into the wastewater system, they can destroy environments quickly and easily. Toxic substances can leach into the waterways, destroying crops and the marine environments they are exposed to. Toxic substances should never be flushed down the sink, not least because it is illegal. They should always be disposed of correctly and there are companies that specialise in treating and transporting contaminated waste.

### **Science Break: Oysters**

Oysters and other shellfish are excellent indicators of the health of a marine environment. Because they are filter feeders, any toxic substances, such as heavy metals, will end up in the oyster and its shell. Oysters that live in areas where there are significant pollution problems have high levels of toxicity and should not be eaten. Researchers study oysters so that they can understand the health of the whole ecosystem. The stuff that ends up in an oyster can reveal lots of information about water runoff, farming practices, deliberate pollution, levels of toxic algae and other aspects of marine ecology. Because eating oysters and other shellfish from some environments can increase your chances of paralytic shellfish poisoning, shellfish sold in Australia must be sourced from clean environments. Remember: a healthy oyster equals a healthy environment!



Because linen articles may be used by several guests over short periods of time, it is essential that infection control measures are followed. This means that clean and dirty items should never come into contact. Linen must be washed at high enough temperatures and treated to sterilise all human and other biological products. If linen is too contaminated to be cleaned satisfactorily then it will be **condemned**. This means that the linen must be destroyed. The linen is placed into special biohazard bags, which are then sent for incineration.

Here is a floor plan of a typical 400 room hotel laundry:





## 2. SORT

Once the items have arrived at the laundry, the next step is to **sort the linen into bundles** in readiness for washing. Linen is generally sorted according to:

- Fabric/fibre type
- Colour
- Degree of staining
- Item type

### *Fabric/Fibre Type*

The construction of the fabric (either natural or man-made) is a crucial indicator of how the item should be laundered. The fabric will dictate the wash time, water temperature, detergent use and agitation required. Common fabrics handled in accommodation venues include:

- Cotton (towelling)
- Polycotton (sheets)
- Linen/cotton blend (restaurant napery)
- Polyester (uniforms)
- Silk (decorative articles/cushion covers)
- Wool/wool blend (blankets/suits)

Be aware that items which are likely to produce excessive lint such as new towels, bath robes and flannel fabrics, should be set apart and cleaned in a separate load.



### *Colour*

Special care must be taken when washing coloured articles to avoid the risk of fabric dye running into other materials or bleeding (seeping onto other parts of the fabric). Colourfastness is the term used to describe the resistance of a fabric to a change in its colour characteristics as a result of washing. If the label indicates 'wash separately' then the item is likely to lose colour in the first few washes and therefore should be washed with similar colours, to prevent contaminating other, lighter coloured articles.

