

1. Housekeeping – Introduction

"I consider housekeeping to be the heart of hotels and it is only when something goes wrong that it is recognized – just like our hearts."

- Sheila Perera FIH Glenmor Manager, Gleneagles Hotel.

The housekeeping department, in any hotel business, contributes to major amount of profit though it is considered as an ancillary service. The simple reason being, a customer demands a clean, tidy, and pleasing ambience.

Housekeeping generates the first impression on a guest's mind. The housekeeping efforts clearly show how the hotel will take care of its guests.

What is Housekeeping?

Housekeeping means performing all the duties towards cleaning, maintaining orderliness, and running a house or a business property. In case of hotels, the housekeeping duties involve maintaining the hotel to the best possible state in terms of cleanliness, and keeping it at highly desirable ambience.

Objectives of Hotel Housekeeping

The main objectives of hotel housekeeping are:

- To maintain overall cleanliness of the entire hotel at all times.
- To perform cleanliness duties most efficiently and effectively.
- To use good quality, safe cleaning equipment and chemicals.
- To manage laundry and linen.
- To control pests.
- To keep up the hotel with classy interior decoration.
- To take care of the furniture, fittings, and fixtures of the entire hotel.

To understand the expanse or scope of housekeeping, it is better to understand the divisions of hotel a hotel, first.

Divisions of a Hotel

There are various divisions (or departments) of a hotel. They are given below.

Front Office

It is responsible for guest check-in and check-out, mail and information services, and concierge services such as tour booking, reserving theatre and restaurants, providing airport taxi service, etc.

Food and Beverage

Food and Beverage department is responsible for preparing menus, foods, and managing inventory of food and beverage items. It includes food and beverage preparation and service for restaurant, lounge, coffee shops, bars, parties, and room service.

Uniformed Service Department

It includes parking and door attendants, drivers, porters, and bell attendants.

Housekeeping

Housekeeping includes the duties of keeping the areas of the hotel clean, tidy, hygienic, and pleasant. It also performs the duties pertaining to decoration of hotel premises.

Sales and Marketing

All sales, services, advertising, promotions, and public relations are taken care of by this team.

Security

Security manager and security workers work to keep the property safe and secured from external hazards.

Accounts

It conducts all financial activities like producing bills and receiving payments, computing employees' compensations and delivering payments. They also carry out the activities such as compiling monthly and annual income statements, depositing and securing cash, and controlling and monitoring assets.

Maintenance

The Maintenance department is responsible for the maintenance of the property. It takes care of repairing furniture and fixtures, and painting the required area. When the hotel is small, these works are contracted from an outside agency.

Engineering and Technology

It is responsible for keeping all of its equipment operational. The duties include maintaining telephone, hotel management software, internet etc. It is also responsible for implementing any new changes required such as upgrading the software and hardware.

Human Resource Department

Human Resource department is responsible for interviewing and recruiting qualified staff to be placed at appropriate positions. They also conduct exit interviews for the employees who wish to quit the work. HRD works to set wages and salaries based on regional market rates and ensures that the hotel business meets safety and health administration standards.

In all these departments, the efforts of housekeeping department are overt. They are directly visible to the guests even before they try food or avail other amenities. Housekeeping creates the first impression about the hotel in the guests' minds. Hence this department can be said as the heart of the hotel business.

Housekeeping Department Layout in Hotel

The layout of the housekeeping department depends on the total number of Guestrooms, Outlets, and Required Staff. The following areas of the department are the most prominent ones:

- **Office of the Executive Housekeeper:** The administrative work of the department is carried out here.
- **Housekeeping Control Desk:** It is accessible and operational 24 hours a day. The housekeeping staff reports at the start and end of the shift here. There are notice boards, storage shelves, registers, lost and found cupboard, and key-hanger matrix.
- **Laundry Area:** Washing, ironing, dry cleaning, folding of linen and staff uniform takes place here.
- **Linen Room:** Here, the linen of the hotel such as bed-sheets, towels, pillow cases, etc., are stored, collected, and carried to the required places in the hotel.
- **Uniform Room:** The staff uniforms are collected, stored, and distributed from here.
- **Tailor Room:** Here, stitching and repairing of linen and uniforms takes place.
- **Housekeeping Stores:** It is a storage area where the cleaning equipment and items, and guest supplies are securely stored.
- **Flower Room:** It is an air-conditioned room with worktables, sink and water supply, cupboards to store vases and stones, and a counter.
- **Lost and found:** It stores all the items left by the guests. It directly communicates with the front office desk, as there the guests tend to first enquire about their lost articles.



Linen Store Room	Tailor Room	Uniform Room	Laundry Area	
Corridor				
Executive House Keeper Office	Housekeeping Desk	Lost and Found	Housekeeping Supplies Store	Flower Room

Housekeeping: Areas of Responsibility

The housekeeping department is responsible to keep the following areas clean and tidy.

- Guest Rooms
- Guest Bathrooms
- Public Areas such as Lobby and Lifts
- Banquets and Conference Halls
- Parking Area
- Sales and Admin Offices
- Garden

Apart from the cleaning task, the housekeeping is also responsible for handling keys of each floor. In addition, it manages the laundry, which is often at some places considered as a sub-department of housekeeping.

Terms Used in Hotel Housekeeping

Here are some commonly used terms in housekeeping:

Term	Meaning
Banquets	It is a multi-course meal or feast, usually given by the host on occasions like a charitable gathering, a ceremony, or a celebration, often precedes or succeeds by honoring speeches.
Bridal Suite	Room reserved for the newly married people.

Check-In	Counter where you announce your arrival or departure to the hotel.
Coffee Shop	Place in a hotel where coffee, light drinks and meals are served.
Desk	Place that provides information or service in a hotel.
Dining Room	Room where guests have their meals.
En Suite	Attached to the room.
Guest Room	Bedroom for a visitor.
Head Board	Upright panel designed or placed behind the head of a bed.
Lobby	A hall, foyer, or waiting room at or near the hotel entrance.
Lounge	Public area of hotel where people can just sit and relax.
Reception	The area/desk at which the guests are received.
Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)	It is a detailed information prepared by the manufacturer or importer of a chemical that describes the physical and chemical properties, health hazards, routes of exposure, precautions for safe handling and use, and first-aid procedures in case any accident happens.

Abbreviations Used in Housekeeping

The following table lists a few common abbreviations used in housekeeping:

Abbreviation	Term	Meaning
ACCT	Accounting	A department of a hotel business that handles finance.
CI	Check-In	Depicts that the room is ready for check in.
CO	Check-Out	The room status when guest has vacated and the room still needs to be prepared for selling.
DL	Double Lock Room	A room with two locks, one by hotel and the other personal lock put by the guest.
DNCO	Did not Check Out	The guest settled the bill but did not check out formally at front office desk.
DND	Do Not Disturb	The DND tag or the privacy lamp depicts that the guest does not wish to be disturbed by housekeeping.
DO	Due Out	The room is expected to become vacant after the following day's checkout time.
FBP	Food and Beverage Product	A product used and sold by Food and Beverage service of the hotel business.
FBS	Food and Beverage Service	A service provided by the hotel business.

FO	Front Office	The first contact point of Hotel staff and the guests.
GC	General Cleaning	A term used for routine cleaning.
GRA	Guest Room Attendant	The room attendant serving under supervisor.
GRS	Guest Refuse Service	The hotels reserve rights to refuse service because of the guest's behavior in the previous visit.
HK	Housekeeping	An important department of service industry.
HM	Honeymooner	Depicts that the room is for the newly-wed couple.
HRD	Human Resources Department	A department taking care of recruiting, induction, and training of new skilled employees.
IS	Inspected	Depicts the status of the guest room ready to sell.
L	Luggage	Luggage in room but bed unused.
NC	Not Cleared	A vacant room not cleared, not ready for selling.
O	Occupied	The status of the room as occupied by the guest or displays signs of being occupied by the guest.
OC	Occupied Clean	
OD	Occupied Dirty	
ONL	Occupied No Luggage	
OOO	Out of Order	The status of room is not ready for selling because of some problem such as clogged basin/toilet, nonfunctioning shower, or broken bed. The supervisor needs to know for how long it will be out of order and is responsible to get it into order as fast as possible.
OS	Out Of Service	The area or equipment not in service.
REC	Recreation	Leisure activity.
RET	Returned Guest	The guest that gives a repeat business as a result of satisfaction.
SA	Special Attention	Depicts that the room requires special attention.
SB	Scantly Baggage	The baggage is put carelessly.
SEC	Security	A department catering for the security of the hotel premises and properties.



Hotel Housekeeping

SM	Sales and Marketing	A department taking care of sales and promotion of the hotel business.
SO	Sleep-Out	The room is occupied but the bed was not used.
SPA	Sanus Per Aquam	Health by or through the water.
UR	Under Repair	Currently under repair and not ready to sell.
V	Vacant	The status of the guest room when the guest has vacated the room.
VC	Vacant Clean	
VD	Vacant Dirty	
VCI	Vacant Clean Inspected	
VIP	Very Important Person	The status of the room that needs extra amenities.

The housekeeping also practices general abbreviations such as *As Soon As Possible (ASAP)*, *Not Yet (NY)*, *Follow Up (FU)*, and *For Your Information (FYI)*, which are also used commonly in the industry.

2. Housekeeping – Staff Duties

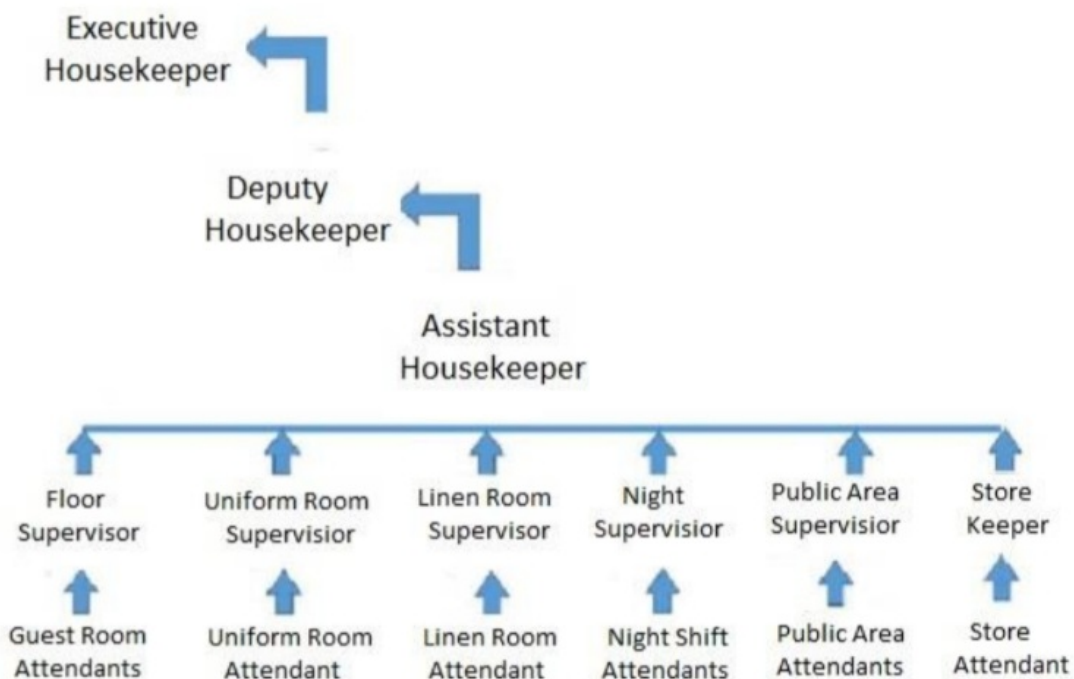
"A new broom sweeps clean; but an old broom knows the corners."

- An Irish Saying.

There is a huge workload on the hotel housekeeping staff. The housekeeping work is carried out at various levels such as managerial level, supervisory level, and operational level. Let us see more about the staff and qualities they should possess.

Structure of Housekeeping Staff

The general structure of housekeeping staff is as shown below:



Let us see the work and responsibilities at each level.

Executive Housekeeper / Manager of Housekeeping

The Executive Manager is the chief of housekeeping department. The Deputy Housekeeper and Assistant Manager of Housekeeping report to him. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring overall cleanliness and aesthetics of the hotel.

- Ensuring overall sanitation, comfort, and ambience of the hotel.
- Training the new joiners and motivate the existing employees.
- Modelling and establishing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cleaning and decorating.
- Monitoring regular inventory of guest supplies and linen.
- Monitoring housekeeping equipment and hotel property.
- Evaluating employee performance, and handling their training, promotions, and transfers.
- Organize flower arrangements for events.
- Presenting the estimate of the required budget to the General Manager of the hotel.

Supervisors of Housekeeping

The supervisors report to the Assistant Housekeeper. Their positions and their respective responsibilities include:

Floor Supervisor

- Issuing keys to the room attendants.
- Coordinating floor operations and tray clearance with room attendants.
- Inspecting rooms for readiness and reporting to the front office for the same.
- Catering for VIP facilities and providing special supplies such as hot drinking water, baby-sitting provision.

Public Area Supervisor

- Ensuring that cleanliness is maintained at all times in public areas such as lobby, lifts, parking, swimming pool, coffee shop, conference hall, banquet hall, and restaurant.
- Ensuring banquet and conference halls are well kept and ready.
- Ensuring the concerned operating staff is available as per the schedule.

Night Supervisor

- Ensuring provision of guest supplies such as water, extra bed, fans, or towels.
- Ensuring the operating staff working at night is following all cleaning SOPs.

- Supervising hotel area at night and ensuring cleanliness in all areas of hotel.

Uniform Room Supervisor

- Providing clean, ironed, and fresh uniforms to the hotel staff.
- Suggesting procurement of any uniforms required.
- Checking repaired linen from tailor room.
- Keeping track of number and condition of uniforms.

Linen Room Supervisor

- Inspecting linen and sending it to the laundry.
- Checking linen from laundry and sending it for ironing.
- Maintaining linen influx and out flux register.
- Checking repaired linen from tailor room.
- Suggesting linen replacements if required.

Operating Staff / Attendants

The positions and responsibilities of the Operating Staff/Attendants are explained below.

Uniform Room Attendant

- Collecting uniforms of staff at the end of every shift and maintaining them to be used for the next time.
- Maintaining the shelves of uniforms and linens clearly.
- Giving and taking back the uniforms from the staff.

Linen Room Attendant

- Segregating the dirty linen according to its type and sending it to the laundry.
- Keeping the track of linen count before and after laundry.
- Stacking towels, bed sheets, pillowcases, table napkins separately into different sections of shelves.

Guest Room Attendant

- Reporting to the floor supervisor.
- Cleaning the guest rooms, guest bathrooms, and the corridors.
- Changing the linen of the guest room and guest bathrooms.
- Topping up the guest supplies.

- Making guest-room beds.
- Replenishing the hotel cleaner's trolley with supplies and linens for the next shift staff.

Storekeeper

- Reporting to the floor supervisor.
- Keeping the count of cleaning equipment and items such as cleaners and detergents.
- Generating requisition to purchase the required material.

Public Area Attendants

- Reporting to public area supervisor.
- Keeping the parking, lobbies, guest rooms, lifts, and corridors in best maintained status.
- Keeping these areas smelling fresh and clean.

Night Shift Attendants

- Reporting any hotel safety issues to the night supervisor.
- Performing housekeeping duties during night.

Qualities of Housekeeping Staff

There are certain professional qualities the housekeeping staff is required to possess:

Personal Hygiene and Appearance

The housekeeping staff on duty must:

- Be well-groomed with high degree of personal hygiene.
- Have trimmed nails and hair, and clean uniform.
- Have a clean and pleasant appearance.

Communications skills

The housekeeping staff must:

- Conduct themselves with a cooperative attitude.
- Speak in a friendly but sincere tone.
- Speak clearly in audible voice of moderate pitch.
- Maintain polite eye contact while interacting with the hotel guests.

Interpersonal skills

For serving the guest and working for cleanliness, the housekeeping staff must:

- Possess right attitude.
- Have good listening skills to avoid any miscommunication.
- Be a good team player.

Personal skills and Traits

The housekeeping staff must:

- Be able to retain and pursue the demand of the guest until it is fulfilled.
- Be sincere and physically fit.
- Respect each hotel guest they are dealing with. They must conduct themselves confidently and courteously.
- Have high integrity.