

Lost and Found Procedure

By Checklister

- ☐ **Receive Lost Item Report from Guest** Capture the initial report professionally and gather all necessary information to begin the search process.

- Greet the guest calmly and acknowledge their concern; ask for a detailed ****description of the item**** (color, brand, size, distinguishing marks).
- Record the ****guest name, room number, checkout date****, and ****contact information**** (phone, email, mailing address). Verify spelling and format of all entries.
- Ask ****where they last saw the item**** and when they noticed it was missing (exact time if possible).
- Document any unique identifiers (initials, serial numbers, brand tags) that help with verification.
- Confirm the best way to contact them (phone preferred for urgent recovery, email for non-urgent updates).

Pitfall: Not recording the guest's contact information or being too brief in the item description. This causes delays if the item is found later.

- ☐ **Check System for Item Status** Search the lost and found system or log to determine if the item has already been recovered or logged by housekeeping or another staff member.

- Open the ****Lost and Found tracking system**** (or log if using paper records).
- Search by ****guest name, room number, and date**** to see if the item was already found and reported.
- If found in system, note the ****storage location, date discovered****, and current status (available for pickup, pending outbound delivery).
- If not found, proceed to initiate a room search with housekeeping.

Pitfall: Skipping this step and scheduling a room search for an item already in the system. Always verify first.

- ☐ **Initiate Room Search with Housekeeping** Contact housekeeping to search the guest's room and common areas if the item is not already logged in the system.

- ****Call or message housekeeping**** with the guest's room number, checkout date, and item description.
- Provide a ****deadline for the search**** (typically within 2 hours during business hours or same day).
- Ask housekeeping to check the room, bathroom, closet, and bed thoroughly.
- Request they also check common areas if applicable (lobby, restaurant, conference room).
- Record the ****time of request**** and the name of the housekeeping staff member assigned.

Pitfall: Not providing a clear deadline or item description. Housekeeping may not prioritize the search or may overlook details.

☐ **Receive and Log Found Item** When housekeeping or another staff member delivers a found item, create a complete intake record and prepare for storage.

- **Verify the item matches the guest's description** (color, size, condition). If uncertain, contact the guest for verbal confirmation before logging.
- Record the **date found, time found, location found** (e.g., Room 412 bathroom counter, Lobby chair), and name of staff who found it.
- Inspect the item for damage or defects and **document the condition** (good, minor wear, damaged, soiled).
- Take a **photograph** of the item if possible (for verification and insurance purposes).
- Assign a **unique reference number** (e.g., LF-20251109-001) and label the item with this number and the guest name.
- Do not open locked items (luggage, safes) or examine contents without guest permission and witness.

Pitfall: Failing to photograph valuable items or not recording the exact location where found. This causes disputes if the item goes missing from storage.

☐ **Categorize Item Type** Classify the item to determine storage location, handling protocol, and retention timeline.

- Select one of the following categories: **High-value** (jewelry, cash, electronics, passport), **Standard** (clothing, toiletries, books), **Fragile** (glasses, cosmetics, electronics), or **Perishable** (food, medications).
- If categorized as **High-value or Perishable**, flag for immediate outbound delivery or special handling (see later tasks).
- If **Fragile**, mark the storage location to ensure careful placement.
- Record the category in the system or on the physical label attached to the item.

Pitfall: Miscategorizing items as standard when they are high-value or fragile, leading to improper storage and damage or loss.

☐ **Secure Item in Storage** Place the item in the designated storage location according to category and hotel procedures.

- **High-value items** must be locked in a secure safe or cabinet, separate from standard items. Record the **safe/cabinet location and lock status**.
- **Standard and Fragile items** may be stored in a secure room (e.g., lost and found office or locked closet). Ensure items are organized by **date found** (oldest first for rotation).
- **Perishable items** must be refrigerated or frozen if applicable; otherwise, discard after 24 hours and document the disposal.
- Update the system with the **storage location code** (e.g., Safe A, Shelf B Row 3) so items can be retrieved quickly.
- Verify the **lock is secure** and log the time the item was secured.

Pitfall: Leaving high-value items unsecured or mixing categories, which increases theft or loss risk.

☐ **Contact Guest with Recovery Notification** Reach out to the guest as soon as the item is secured to inform them of recovery and discuss next steps.

- **Call the guest first** if they requested phone contact; use the phone number recorded during intake.
- **State the item details** and confirm it matches their description before proceeding.
- Explain the **next steps**: guest can pick up at the hotel within a specific timeframe, or have the item mailed/couriered (at guest expense unless hotel policy waives).
- If the guest is local or remaining in the area, offer **immediate pickup at the front desk** (provide hours, location, and request for ID).
- If the guest has checked out or lives far away, explain the **mailing option** and request **delivery address and method preference** (regular mail, courier, international options).
- Record the guest's **decision and delivery method** in the system.
- Send a **confirmation email** if email contact was provided, including the reference number, item description, and recovery instructions.

Pitfall: Not reaching out promptly or not offering pickup/delivery options clearly. Guests may assume the item is lost permanently.

☐ **Arrange Item Outbound Delivery** Prepare the item for shipment or guest pickup, depending on the method chosen.

- **For guest pickup**: Prepare a secure package or envelope with the **reference number and guest name** clearly marked. Brief the front desk staff on handoff procedures (verify guest ID, confirm item details, obtain signature or confirmation).
- **For mail delivery**: Obtain the guest's **mailing address** (confirm spelling and postal code). Wrap the item securely with appropriate padding; use the hotel's standard shipping supplies and carrier (typically postal service or courier).
- **For high-value items**: Use registered mail, tracking, or courier services with insurance and signature required. Record the **tracking number** and **cost** (charge to guest folio or note if waived).
- **For fragile items**: Use fragile tape, extra padding, and internal filler to minimize damage in transit.
- Generate a **shipping label** with the guest address, hotel return address, and reference number.
- Update the system with the **delivery method, tracking number, cost, and ship date**.
- Retain a **copy of the shipping label** for records.

Pitfall: Using insufficient padding or shipping to an incorrect address, resulting in damage or lost items in transit.

☐ **Document Item Departure** Record the final status of the item once it leaves hotel custody.

- Update the system status to **"Shipped"** or **"Released for Pickup"**.
- Log the **exact date and time** the item left the hotel or was picked up by the guest.
- If shipped, record the **tracking number, carrier, and delivery deadline** (expected arrival date).
- If picked up by guest, note the **front desk staff name** and **date/time of pickup**.
- Retain the **signed receipt or confirmation** (digital or paper) as proof of delivery.
- Mark the storage location as **empty** so the space can be reused.

Pitfall: Not updating the system or losing tracking information, creating confusion if the guest inquires about the item.

☐ **Monitor Item Retention Timeline** Track how long items remain unclaimed and follow hotel policy for disposition.

- **Standard items**: Retain for 30 days from the date found. After 30 days, if no contact has been made or delivery is declined, prepare for donation or disposal.
- **High-value items**: Retain for 90 days. If unclaimed after 90 days, consult management or follow local legal requirements (may require formal notice or escrow).
- **Perishable items**: Discard after 24–48 hours of receipt; document the disposal and the reason.
- Create a **monthly audit report** of items nearing their retention deadline. Flag items for **final contact attempt** or release to next stage (donation/disposal).
- Use the system to set automated **reminders** or generate a weekly report of unclaimed items.

Pitfall: Losing track of retention dates, leading to unclaimed items taking up storage space indefinitely.

☐ **Attempt Final Guest Contact (if Unclaimed)** Make one last effort to reach the guest before disposing of or donating an unclaimed item.

- **30 days before disposal/donation date**, send the guest an **email or letter** stating the item will be disposed of unless claimed by a specific date (e.g., 14 days).
- Include the **reference number, item description, storage date, and contact instructions** (how to arrange pickup or delivery).
- Provide a **clear deadline** (e.g., "Please respond by 25 November 2025 or the item will be disposed of").
- Attempt a **phone call** if a phone number is available and local time permits.
- Document the **date of contact attempt, method, and response** (if any) in the system.
- If no response, proceed to disposal or donation with management approval.

Pitfall: Not attempting contact or setting an unclear deadline, resulting in potential guest disputes.

☐ **Dispose of or Donate Unclaimed Items** Remove unclaimed items from storage following legal and policy guidelines.

- **Confirm the item has reached its retention deadline** and no guest contact response was received.
- **Obtain management approval** before disposal, especially for high-value items (document approval in writing).
- **Options**: Donate to a local charity, recycle, or discard (depending on item condition and local regulations).
- If donating, record the **charity name, contact, and date of donation**. Request a **donation receipt** for potential tax documentation.
- If discarding, document the **method** (trash, recycling, hazardous waste if applicable) and **date**.
- Update the system status to **"Disposed"** or **"Donated"** with supporting details.
- Archive the complete **item file** (intake form, photos, contact attempts, disposal record).

Pitfall: Disposing of items without documentation or management approval, creating liability and audit issues.