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Notes

THE RECEPTION DESK AND YOU

*M*ost organizations are run by a group of individuals or by a team, and the receptionist is a member of that team. The receptionist works in what is called the 'Front Office'. The Front Office staff have a direct and personal contact with all guests and visitors. This makes the reception desk the focal point of any organization.



OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- list front office jobs; and
- distinguish different kinds of conversation.

26.1 FRONT OFFICE DUTIES

Usually, the duties of a receptionist are to:

- Welcome the guests/visitors and offer them help
- Answer telephone calls effectively
- Attend to routine enquiries
- Take down messages left by visitors and callers and pass them on to the right persons as soon as possible
- Note down messages, make bookings, reservations, cancellations and plan schedules
- Help the guests/visitors with any queries or problems that may arise.

**Notes**

Though all receptionists have much in common, their specific duties may vary from organization to organization. It is quite likely that in a big hotel a receptionist has only to receive guests, whereas in a small hotel she attends to enquiries, reservations and book-keeping as well. Sometimes the receptionist does the work of a telephone operator.

A receptionist is briefed about her duties at the time of appointment. But there are certain other bits of information that she will have to learn on the job. A good knowledge of the structure of the hotel/office, the main departments of the employees, and office procedures are among the other things a receptionist also knows.

KEEP HANDY

To do her job efficiently, a receptionist should keep the following items on her desk:

- A telephone directory
- An internal telephone directory
- An index book of telephone numbers frequently used
- Names and addresses of hotels nearby
- Information about places of tourist interest and local sightseeing tours
- A railway time table
- Flight schedules
- Forms and brochures like reservation voucher, 'C' form etc.

An office receptionist will also need:

A register of callers

An appointment diary (a list of who is coming to see whom and when)

A list of staff on leave/tour

YOU SHOULD REMEMBER

Courtesy and good manners are the two prime requirements of a receptionist's job. The guests and the visitors should be treated courteously even when they are impolite. This, plus a friendly tone of voice, becomes all the more important in case of unavoidable delays. A certain amount of tact and diplomacy is also needed in dealing with complaints or awkward situations and in handling difficult guests.

A receptionist represents her organization; she is the contact point between her organization and the outside world. Therefore, she should be formal, pleasant and efficient. She has to maintain the right tone through her voice, gestures and language.



OVERALL QUESTIONS

Study the following dialogues to decide whether each dialogue is (i) a telephone conversation or face-to-face interaction; and whether (ii) the tone is polite or rude.

EXAMPLE A.

- Receptionist (R) : Hindustan Petroleum, Can I help you?
Man (M) : This is Ranjit Malik. Can I speak to Vikram Yadav, please?
Receptionist (R) : Hold the line, please.

EXAMPLE B.

- R : (off-hand): Yes.
M : Good morning, my name is Vinod. I am here to see Mr. Vikram Yadav.
R : Who?
M : Mr. Yadav.
R : Oh, he's busy I think,
M : Could you let him know I'm here, please?
R : Okay.

EXAMPLE C

- Operator : Telco
Woman : This is Pillai for Maruti Udyog. I'd like to speak to Mr. Antony.
Operator : Sorry, who is calling?
Woman : My name is Deepa Pillai. P.I.L.L.A.I.



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- Operator : Hold the line, Ms Pillai, I'll try to put you through to Mr. Antony ... (a pause) I'm afraid his line's engaged.
- Woman : Oh, I'll call again.
- Operator : Do you have his extension number?
- Woman : No, I don't.
- Operator : It's 250
- Woman : Thank you very much. Good bye.

You may have noticed that there is a difference in the way the receptionist and the visitor speak when they are not face to face. You should also have observed that the receptionist was not very polite in one of the examples.

**CHECK YOUR ANSWERS**

- A. i) Telephone conversation
ii) Polite
- B. i) Face to Face
ii) Rude
- C. i) Telephone conversation
ii) Polite