

# How to Make Group Hotel Booking Ridiculously Simple

Advice from the Experts at Hotel Engine





# Introduction

We were going to make a list of the best ways to make group hotel bookings ridiculously simple — but we realized all the best advice can be summed up with one simple phrase: let us do it for you, for free. Really.

In this e-book, we will cover how you can hand off your group bookings at no additional cost to your business, and with none of the regular headaches caused by other solutions.

If you're sold, [skip down to Part Three](#) and your job here is done. But if you'd rather learn all you can about group trips, what they are and how to book them on your own, we can help with that too.

**In this insights-packed guide, we'll address topics like:**

- ✓ The typical steps involved in group hotel reservations (if you choose to do it yourself)
- ✓ What information you'll need to start your group trip
- ✓ Common mistakes to avoid
- ✓ When you should start booking a group hotel trip
- ✓ What negotiating with a hotel looks like
- ✓ How to protect against fraud
- ✓ How to handle billing and reconciliation
- ✓ How to simplify guest lists and modifications
- ✓ How much time and money you could save by outsourcing the booking process

**Let's start with the basics.**



Part One:

# The Basics

## What qualifies as a “group” hotel stay?

In the hospitality industry, a group stay is generally defined by a contract held with a hotel guaranteeing 10 rooms or more per night for an agreed upon date or dates. (It often includes a 2-night minimum).

Group accommodation like these can’t be booked through typical free online booking tools; they have to be arranged directly with a hotel.

## The Typical Group Lodging Process

When you book a group stay yourself, you’ll find there are several typical steps. They include:

- Gathering information about your trip and your travelers
- Researching hotels around the destination
- Contacting each hotel to discuss availability and your group’s needs
- [Requesting a proposal](#) (usually from more than one hotel)
- Negotiating a group discount with each hotel
- Selecting a hotel and finalizing a contract
- Providing the hotel with guest information
- Coordinating billing with the hotel
- Reconciling charges for all your travelers’ individual hotel folios

And if you have more than one event per year or recurring trips to the same location, you'll begin the process fresh each time.

(We know: it's a lot. If you're feeling overwhelmed, just skip down to [Part Three](#) for a much easier way.)

## Before You Search

It's important to have a thorough plan for your group trip before you begin looking for and contacting hotels. Even if they have availability during the period of travel, their ability to meet your group's needs will likely vary, so the more information you can provide, the better.

Typically, hotels will request information including (but not necessarily limited to):

- The name of your event
- The nature of your event (e.g., crew housing, industry conference, etc.)
- Your contact and billing information
- Guest total and room types
- Any conference or meeting space you'll need
- If you have any flexibility with your dates
- The max rate you're willing to pay



*The process was all just, picking up the phone and calling around to hotels. We could research on the internet about what hotels are in the area, but then we'd have to call them individually to find out about their availability and negotiate rates.*



*Beth Gowen, Housing and Travel  
Supervisor at Medical Solutions*



To ensure you get the best possible hotel for your group, you should consider your answers to the following questions ahead of choosing or contacting any hotels:



**What [duty of care obligations](#) are you required to meet? How might those requirements translate to the type of hotel you look for?** Consider: is your crew going to be working in a safe area? If not, you might need to find a hotel a bit further away and provide them with safe transport to and from their job site.



**How many people are traveling? Will the guest list change, fluctuate, or involve different arrival/departure times?** Some hotels may charge change fees, so it's worth thinking about ahead of time and factoring it into your budget.



**How many rooms (and which room types) will you need?** Consider: will any of your travelers be sharing rooms? Do any need [ADA](#) or [pet-friendly accommodation](#)?



**What is your per-night budget?** Having a range will help you negotiate with hotels, leveraging for the lowest possible rate.



**What other amenities or special accommodations might your travelers need or want?** Consider: Will you need truck parking? Rooms with kitchenettes? Knowing your priorities as well as your “nice-to-haves” can help you make decisions when options seem similar otherwise.



**Will you need conference or meeting room space? If so, how much?** Hotels will want to know whether you need additional space outside of guest rooms in order to calculate your group's space-to-room ratio.

Your answers to these questions are critical as you consider whether your hotel options truly meet your group's needs.

Want more? Check out the [8 top things to consider before every hotel search](#).



Part Two:

# Common Group Booking Mistakes

Whether this is your first time coordinating or you're a seasoned expert, group trips are always complicated. Avoid making them harder than they need to be by learning from the most common mistakes made when booking group reservations.

## Booking last minute

While it might be tempting to wait till the last minute to book a hotel when you're traveling solo, it's never a good idea with a group trip.

General advice is to book group lodging at least six months in advance, though eight or ten months may be safer depending on where you're traveling. Keep in mind that some destinations will have fewer options, and therefore may not be able to accommodate a large group if you wait too long.

Of course, you're not out of options when you need to book after the six-month mark. In fact, some booking services specialize in sourcing last-minute accommodations for groups.

If it's not possible to plan ahead — for example, if you're [booking for a disaster relief team](#) who needs to get on site as fast as possible — it's best to turn to a partner like Hotel Engine.



### Did you know?

Hotels benefit from group travel because they get guaranteed occupancy, and don't have to pay the regular distribution or marketing costs for each booking. As a result, they're inclined to provide extra discounts to incentivize groups to choose their property.

## Not negotiating (or not negotiating well)

Between the search, the booking, the contract and the guest list, you'll most likely spend quite a bit of time coordinating each group trip. Even so, it's important not to rush the negotiation process.

Try to remember that you always have a minimum degree of leverage, because hotels always want group bookings. If you're negotiating directly with a hotel, push back on their initial rate estimate, as you may be able to save more. Keep in mind that savings increase for trips during the week or during the hotel's off season. If you can, adjust your travel timing accordingly.

Finally, if you know how to calculate your space-to-room ratio, you can utilize that in your negotiation. Start by asking the hotel what their ideal space-to-room ratio is. The closer your group is to that number, the better your chance of getting a discount.

### *Why space-to-room ratios matter (and how to calculate yours)*

Depending on the size of the hotel, the amount of meeting or event space your group requires will affect your room pricing. Here's why.

If two potential groups both need 35,000 square feet of event space from their hotel, potential properties would prefer to offer that space to a group that needs 300 rooms, rather than 30. To calculate your group's space-to-room ratio, you multiply the number of meeting seats times the square footage needed for those seats, and then divide that number by the number of rooms you have booked for that same night. **It might look something like this:**

Day	Agenda	Total seats	Meeting space needed	Guest rooms	Space-to-rooms ratio
Day 1	Main meeting room for 100	100	2,000 ft	100	20
Day 2	Main meeting room for 100 3 breakout rooms for 35 each Lunch & dinner for 100	405	8,100 ft	100	81
Day 3	Main meeting room for 100 Lunch for 100	200	4,000	1	4,000

If you can, adapt your space requirements to get your ratio closer to the hotel's preference. For instance, instead of booking a space for your meeting and a separate space for your lunch, host both in the same room. That way you're not doubling your square footage requirement.

## Going with the first hotel

While it might be tempting to save time by booking the first decent option to come along, comparing and contrasting properties can help you capitalize on savings and amenities simultaneously. Plus, having multiple quotes increases your bargaining leverage — not to mention the likelihood that you'll satisfy more of your travelers' preferences.

## Not getting a single point of contact

Unfortunately, one of the greatest challenges of coordinating group travel is getting consistent support. When you book directly, you may end up speaking to a new desk agent or reservation specialist every time you call — which means a lot of repeating the same information. Plus, you'll likely find that some agents are more helpful than others.

If you can't get a dedicated point of contact to help you, make sure to take careful and thorough notes about who said (or did) what to avoid getting wires crossed.

## Not reviewing contracts carefully

It might seem like a no-brainer, but make sure to review hotel contracts thoroughly before you sign. Unfortunately, there are no standard contract protections for companies or individuals in the US. Instead, **contracts are considered on a case-by-case basis**, so you'd need to get the court involved if you believe a contract you signed included unfair stipulations.

Avoid paying unexpected fees or accepting unreasonable hotel contracts by making note of these especially important parts of standard hotel contracts — and looking them over carefully.



### Did you know?

According to [survey results published in March 2023](#), nearly half of all participants admitted to only skimming legal contracts before signing — and 13% said they don't read them at all.

## ***Cancellations and modifications***

Hotel contracts always involve cancellation clauses that stipulate how much you'll be charged if you need to cancel or modify your booking. Usually, the further out from the arrival date that you cancel, the lower the fee will be, because the hotel will have more time to rebook those rooms.

Contracts sometimes also require fees for modifications, like changing the number of rooms or even guest names. Make sure to double check the cancellation policy and fee timing in your contract before signing, especially if your dates or guest list are not yet fully set in stone.

## ***Courtesy, complimentary or guaranteed***

As you develop the terms of your lodging, you may be offered a choice between two types of room blocks: courtesy/complimentary blocks, or guaranteed blocks.

Courtesy blocks are more common with private events like weddings, as the hotel agrees to hold rooms without a risk to the organizer if they remain empty. Guaranteed blocks, by contrast, involve an agreement that the hotel will be paid for a certain percentage of the total held rooms — whether they're rented by guests or remain empty.

Businesses can increase their negotiating leverage by choosing a guaranteed block. The hotel will be more likely to offer a better price if they know that they are certain to receive that revenue. Of course, this means you assume the risk of needing to cover the cost of no-shows, but it may be worth it — especially if you build a fair rate of *attrition* into the contract.

## ***Attrition***

Every hotel contract will include a clause regarding attrition. Attrition refers to the amount of vacancy deemed acceptable according to your contract for “guaranteed” occupancy, allowing you wiggle room if you don't have as many travelers as you expected.

Typically, there are three types of attrition to choose between: Revenue Attrition, Per-Night Attrition and Cumulative Attrition. All three types ensure that the hotel will receive a certain minimum revenue, no matter what.

On the next page, we'll take a deep dive into all the different types of attrition and what to know about them.



## All About Attrition

### ***Revenue Attrition***

Revenue attrition clauses tend to be the simplest to understand. They require that by a certain date, the hotel receives a certain level of “expected revenue” (say \$100K) from your group’s overall stay. They typically allow for 10-20% attrition, which in the case of \$100K of expected revenue, means that if the hotel receives \$80-\$90K from your group, you won’t be required to pay extra attrition fees.

This kind of attrition clause also allows you some flexibility to pivot to meet your requirements, like by sending additional travelers or upgrading your rooms to meet the revenue minimum.

### ***Per-Night Attrition or Cumulative Attrition***

Clauses guarantee certain level of “room pickup,” either per-night or cumulatively over the entire length of your trip. When rooms remain vacant, they don’t count toward your requirement.

Hotels typically prefer Per-Night Attrition clauses, but we recommend pushing for a Cumulative Attrition agreement if you can. As shown below, it may work out in your favor if timelines differ across travelers — especially if the deadline date allows you to add nights at the end of your stay to meet your quota.

### ***Attrition: Per night or per stay?***

Say you’ve booked a four-day group trip and agreed to guarantee 100 picked-up rooms total (rather than a certain revenue amount). That means you’re responsible for either 100 picked-up rooms cumulatively over the course of the entire trip (as with a Cumulative Attrition clause), or 25 picked-up rooms per night (as with a Per-Night Attrition clause).

On the first night, 30 rooms are filled by your travelers. Some people leave early, so that number drops to 25 rooms on night two, 20 rooms on night three and 10 rooms on night four. That means that over the course of this four-day period, 85 rooms were picked up total.

If you negotiated with the hotel to guarantee that you would pick up 100 rooms with a 20% Cumulative Attrition clause, it doesn’t matter that you were 15 rooms short. You are under your attrition percentage and won’t pay any extra fees.

However, if you signed a contract with a Per-Night Attrition clause, you would be held accountable for 25 picked-up rooms per night. Even with a 20% attrition allowance, you’d end up paying extra fees for the low occupancy on the fourth night.

## ***Indemnification***

Indemnification is an incredibly important aspect of the contracts you negotiate. It applies to the safety of your travelers and legal liability in different circumstances. For example: If one of your travelers slips and falls in their hotel room, you'll want to make sure that the contract does not hold you legally liable.

Similarly, if something happens that is not directly related to the safety of the hotel (e.g., two travelers fight on the property and someone becomes injured), the hotel will want to make sure it is not legally liable for those injuries. Check this section to make sure the balance seems fair.

## ***Acts of God***

Like indemnification clauses, Act of God clauses are included in these contracts to determine who would suffer the cost if unanticipated circumstances (like weather disasters) made travelers unable to reach their hotels.

Hotels are always careful about the language in this clause, to ensure they're not liable unless the circumstances make it impossible and/or illegal for the hotel to accommodate your guests. Read your contract closely to avoid paying under these circumstances.

If you're unsure of the exact terms in your contract, ask the hotel salesperson to send you a plain word explanation in writing.

## **Choosing the wrong booking tool**

To simplify your life, you could [adopt a software or agency partner](#) to help you book your group trips. However, choosing the wrong booking solution can be a critical mistake.

Paying for expensive travel management software affects your bottom line, especially if you don't meet minimum requirements and get charged a fee.

Maximize your travel program's return on every dollar you invest by adopting a tool that simplifies hotel booking, makes changes easier, streamlines billing and reporting, comes with world class support — and is free to use. You'll save valuable time with Hotel Engine's white-glove service and 24/7 support, included gratis with every group trip or extended stay you need to book.

Which brings us to the most important part of this e-book: **Part Three!**



Part Three:

# The 3 Steps to Super-Simplified Group Lodging

When it really comes down to it, the best way to make group hotel reservations ridiculously simple is to *stop booking them yourself*.

Which means it's time for:

## The 3 Steps to Super-Simplified Group Lodging

1. Create a trip request with Hotel Engine.
2. Let Hotel Engine handle all the details.
3. Find something else to do with all the time you save!

## Ways That Hotel Engine Makes Group Stays Simpler Than Ever

### *Handing off the hassle*

When you begin a group trip with Hotel Engine, you'll be assigned a dedicated Project Manager to oversee the process for you, from booking to billing and beyond.

That means you'll have a single point of contact every step of the way.

Don't waste time explaining and re-explaining your needs to your hotel. Your dedicated Project Manager is standing by to take ownership of the coordination, and provide you with consistent, knowledgeable assistance throughout the entire journey.

### Effortless lodging search

After you complete the simple [group trip request form](#), we'll begin a property search on your behalf. We'll compare properties and amenities according to your specified priorities (e.g., distance from destination, amenities, etc.), to provide you with property options that suit your needs.

### Easy property comparisons

Compare your personalized property recommendations side-by-side from the Hotel Engine platform to see how they stack up against your group's requirements.



*Having someone to reach out to who knows my name and knows our company is so nice. I'm not just dealing with a ticketing system; I'm dealing with a person. It gives us those warm, fuzzy feelings to know someone is there to support us with whatever we might need.*



*Mandy Buck,  
Director of Logistics, HHS*

### Consider this scenario



Hotel A and Hotel B both offer similar rooms for the same price and meet your group's basic needs. However, Hotel A offers a complimentary breakfast and laundry services your long-term travelers may be glad of, and Hotel B has [better truck parking](#). Which do you choose?

You can also get insight into the property's other perks. For instance, add-ons like airport shuttles, early check-in/late check-out and free daily breakfasts can help ensure a positive experience.

### Group savings, no negotiation

Stop sinking time into negotiating with hotels. Hotel Engine's Groups team is made up of expert negotiators, and even have pre-negotiated rates with certain hotel groups to connect groups with great savings even faster. That means you can get great rates from multiple properties without the research, phone calls or back-and-forth.

### *Hand off lists and modifications*

Speaking of back and forth: one major way that Hotel Engine saves its customers time is by managing guest lists for them. Group travel is complicated enough without tracking and updating every guest or date change.

That's what your Project Manager is for. When your itinerary or guest list changes, simply let them know, and they'll contact the hotel directly to coordinate any modifications on your behalf.

### **How do costs compare to booking directly with hotels?**

You've learned how much time you can save by using Hotel Engine Groups, but what about money? We've got good news for you: nearly all of our bookings cost our customers roughly the same, or even less, than they'd pay directly to the hotel.

How is this possible? Hotel Engine leverages strong relationships with hotels around the world, as well as the combined negotiating power of our hundreds of thousands of members. That enables us to secure strong, exclusive discounts, which offset the nominal booking fees we add to cover our white-glove Groups service and 24/7 support.

And you'll pay nothing else — there are no membership or subscription fees, no contracts and no minimum requirements.

### *Support for last-minute bookings*

Nothing is harder than finding rooms for a large group at the last minute. If something comes up (or your group is part of a disaster relief effort responding to a sudden emergency), your dedicated Project Manager and our expert Groups team are here to help.

#### **Just provide them with some information**

about your group and they'll take over the legwork for you.

### *Handling all types of complex bookings*

At Hotel Engine, our white-glove service isn't limited to only large groups. Our expert Groups team also provides assistance with smaller groups, extended stays, recurring bookings or trips requiring unique amenities.

For more information about how we can help with unique situations, [contact us directly](#).

### *Billing, simplified*

Are you wasting hours on repetitive credit card authorization forms which require providing sensitive payment information?

Forget the manual back-and-forth involved in repetitive credit card authorization forms, not to mention the sensitive payment information they expose to fraud.

Hotel Engine works with the hotel and provides virtual payment, removing your sensitive information. You won't have to manage folios for every traveler on your team either. We'll verify and consolidate all your travelers' hotel bills, and send you one streamlined invoice. Plus: you can access all your invoices and every hotel folio for every traveler on-demand from your account, 24/7.

#### Case in Point

National Assemblers is saving “days of work” after switching to Hotel Engine for group trip coordination.

[Read the case study to learn how.](#)

Want more? Check out [Our Best Features for Simplifying Billing](#).

### ***Incidentals coverage***

Remove credit cards from check-in altogether with Hotel Engine's [Incidentals Coverage](#). Simply opt into incidentals coverage and we'll handle any incidental charges on your team's reservations up front. After check-out, we'll verify the charges and send a single bill, so you can save valuable time tracking down which charges belong to which rooms or challenging incorrect charges yourself.

### ***Best-in-class reporting***

Keep a close eye on your travel budget across both group and solo trips. With the Trends dashboard, you have [on-demand access to where your money is being spent](#), and can filter by time period, traveler and custom fields — like job name, funding source, etc. Download a copy for your records or next presentation.

### ***24/7 support***

Along with your dedicated Project Manager, you and your travelers will have access to our US-based Member Support team via [live chat](#), phone, or [email](#) — 24/7 and 365.

Plus, every time you book with us, you'll be able to leverage the guest info, loyalty programs and custom fields you've previously added to your account — so every subsequent group trip is easier than the last.

### Case in Point

#### Medical Solutions X Hotel Engine

Over \$457,320 saved so far (and growing)

\$218,784 saved in the last year alone

\$18,682 earned in Hotel Engine Rewards

1,577+ hours saved each year

[Read the case study](#)

## How much could your company save?

Our customers save up to 60% off hotels with the exclusive rates on our platform, and get great group lodging deals negotiated on your behalf.

### Calculate Your Savings Now!

Number of trips per month 300

Number of travelers per trip 10

Estimated annual savings  
\$450,000

Calculate my savings

[Check out our Savings Calculator to see for yourself.](#)



# Conclusion

Before you plan your next group trip, reflect on your company's current travel program and coordinating practices. Ask yourself:

- How many people are involved with coordinating each trip?
- How many hours do you spend searching for hotels and negotiating group rates and contracts?
- How much time is spent on managing guest lists, filling out credit card authorizations and processing folios?
- How many group trips do you plan in a year?
- What pain points or past mistakes have you already encountered while booking business lodging?
- What tasks might you do instead, if you weren't spending so much time coordinating travel?

Remember: time is valuable too.

If you're ready to save your company loads of it — and get a great deal — [hand off the hassle of your next group trip to Hotel Engine](#). There are no commitments, no subscriptions and no minimum spend requirements on Hotel Engine, so you can leverage our tools and the expertise of our Groups team as much or as little as you like.

And start enjoying:

- Exclusive savings and negotiated group rates
- The white-glove support of a dedicated Project Manager for any group trips or long-term stays (at no additional cost)
- [Seamless traveler tracking](#) from your central trip dashboard
- [On-demand reporting](#) where you can view spending and download actionable data
- Serious time (and money!) savings across all your trips

## Ready to delegate your next group trip?

Start a [group trip request](#) today.