

Hotel Tipping Guide

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

Q: My friends and I recently had a get-away weekend in New York City at a luxury hotel. We were overwhelmed, and somewhat unprepared, by the staff which seemed to be tripping over themselves to help us, all with their hands out. We would appreciate if you could provide a guide to hotel tipping so we can plan better next time.

A: Navigating through the etiquette of tipping can be rather confusing. As a matter of fact, in the U.S. it has evolved into a subculture with all sorts of hidden expectations, especially at a five-star hotel.

My first piece of advice is to have plenty of ones and some five dollar bills on hand. Fold the bills and keep them easily accessible so you can seamlessly guide the tip into the staff's hand. Remember, tipping is at your discretion according to how well services were provided or exceptionally executed.

Use the following guide the next time you book accommodations at any hotel:

- **Porter or Doorman** – No tip is required for opening the door. However, \$1-\$2 per bag should be given if they handle your luggage; more if they are heavy. The same rule applies if the Porter hails you a cab or covers you with an umbrella. It is acceptable to wait until the end of your stay to provide their tip as long as the same person is on duty each day.
- **Bell Staff** - \$1-\$2 per bag if they bring your bags to your room. If they show you around or prepare your room in any way, tipping \$5-\$10 should cover everything.
- **Elevator Attendant** – Usually a greeting with a smile and a thank you will suffice.
- **Room Service** - Gratuity is usually included in the price of your order - check to be sure. Tipping \$2-\$5 is optional, but encouraged if the person shows extra care and sets up your meal.
- **Housekeeping** - \$1-\$5 per night is acceptable depending on the hotel level. It is best to tip daily since different chambermaids might be cleaning your room. The cash should be placed in a sealed envelope and clearly marked so there won't be any confusion.
- **Special Requests** - \$2 for a special request such as a pillow to be delivered, or \$1 each for more than one item such as a toothbrush and toothpaste.
- **Maintenance** – Tipping is not required for fixing something that is broken or replacing something that is missing.
- **Valet Parking** - \$1-\$5 for retrieving your car on a sliding Volkswagen/BMW scale. Tipping is suggested, but optional when parking your car.
- **Concierge** – Tipping varies with the level of service provided. No tipping is required for ordinary requests such as restaurant accommodations and directions. \$2-\$5 is required for show tickets and dinner reservations, or if the person goes above and beyond to get you into a coveted spot in town, a tip of \$10-\$20 is in order.
- **Wait Staff** – 15-20% of the bill excluding tax and expensive wine.
- **Sommelier** – According to how much service was provided, tip 10-20% of the wine bill. Remember to specify on the credit card receipt which portion is for the Sommelier.
- **Bartender/Cocktail Waitress** - 10-15% of the total tab or \$1 per drink.
- **Message Therapist** – 15-20% of the total bill.
- **Manicurist** – 10-15% of the total bill.

Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Email your question(s) to: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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