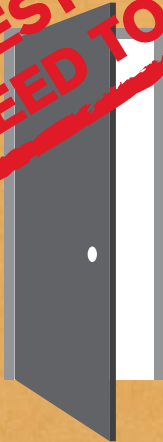




YOUR VENUE BOOKING
SURVIVAL
GUIDE

**47 QUESTIONS YOU
NEED TO ASK**



ROOM SUPPORT FOOD ACCOMMODATION

If you're planning an event and need to select the best venue, these 47 questions will be an invaluable part of your selection process. They bring together 60 years' experience of bookings, venues and running events and include answers to the most commonly asked questions. You'll also find exactly the right questions to ask to make sure you avoid the pitfalls that are just waiting to catch the unwary event organiser.

Please give us a call if you have any further questions or specific items you would like more background information about as we'd be delighted to help.

Happy booking.



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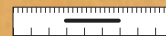
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1 YOUR ROOM



QUESTIONS 1-10



Your event will revolve around one or more rooms. Here are the questions to ask to ensure the room(s) is/are right for you.

1 Is the room the right size for the number of delegates you have?

There is nothing worse than turning up at a venue to find that everyone is squashed in a room like sardines. Many venues are widely optimistic about the number of people that a room can hold. Bear in mind that although the Guinness Book of records says that you can fit 17 people in a telephone box, it doesn't mean to say they would be comfortable! Insist that you are given the room sizes and be very suspicious of any venue that is unable or unwilling to provide them.

At the end of this document you'll find a quick way to compare different rooms.

We want your event to be both productive and enjoyable and the right space is essential for this.

2 Does the room have natural daylight?

We all prefer to work in rooms that have natural daylight and it's a struggle to keep your delegates attention, especially after lunch, in a dull room with false light. Bright rooms are essential!

3 Is there a sufficient presentation area in the room for the presenter, screen, flipcharts, projector and a table for the instructor's materials?

Always ensure that the room has adequate space, not just for your delegates, but also for the people presenting the event. If you are using a data projector, there should be at least 1.5 metres at the front of the room for a presentation area.



4 Do you have various sizes of whiteboard and flipcharts?

You really want to make as much of the environment as possible. That means having the right size screen, flipcharts and whiteboards.

5 Are the rooms air conditioned?

A stifling environment is not conducive to running a great event, so it is worth checking that you can control the temperature effectively.

6 Are syndicate rooms available and are they close by? Do they have natural daylight?

Natural daylight is just as important in your syndicate rooms as in your main room, especially when you break out in the afternoon after lunch! Make sure the room is big enough and not cluttered with unnecessary furniture. Ask the venue to allocate you a syndicate room close to your main room so that it's easy for your delegates to find their way around. This will ensure you don't experience any delays with delegates trying to find their way to and from syndicate rooms in a totally different part of the building.

7 Is chilled water available in the room? Are cordials available?

Delegates appreciate mineral water but it can add significantly to your costs. Charges for a bottle of mineral water can be as much as £5 per bottle, although £2.50 to £3 would be more typical. Luke warm water is unappealing to your delegates, so just leaving a couple of bottles of mineral water on the tables is only part of the solution. A chilled water dispenser with unlimited cool water on tap, free of charge would be ideal.



Many delegates like cordials to add to the water. Check if this is available and the cost involved.

8 Are wrapped sweets provided in the room?

Your delegates might like some sweets or mints during the event as they help improve concentration levels. Is this something the venue provides and if so how much does it cost?

9 Can I specify how the room is to be set-up?

You will need a specific set-up for your event; will the venue change the lay-out of the room? Can this be done for you before you arrive at the venue?

10 Are the chairs comfortable? Can they be adjusted?

If your event is going to last for more than just a few hours, you want the delegates' focus to be on the event itself and not on struggling to be comfortable.

2 EVENT SUPPORT



QUESTIONS 11-17



- 11 Who will look after us on the day? Will their prime role be ensuring the success of your event?**

Every good venue will dedicate a team to your event. You need to ensure that there will be at least one member of the venue's operations team whose responsibility is to look after your needs on the day. Make sure that there will also be technical support on site all day. No matter what type of event you are running, if you're using any equipment at all it's imperative that you have the support. There is nothing worse than delays because the projector isn't doing what you want it to do. Technical and operational support will ensure smooth running of your event and minimum disruption if anything doesn't quite go according to plan.

- 12 Can you personally welcome the delegates and register them in?**

Find out if the venue can provide a reception team to welcome your delegates to the venue. After all, the venue provider knows the venue best; who better to welcome your guests? When the venue is able to register your delegates, you and your colleagues can spend more time preparing for the event. The venue should provide this service not only to help you but also to conform to Health & Safety Legislation.

- 13 Is there proof of positive feedback from other events? Can you provide me with feedback about the venue?**

Ask the venue to provide you with copies of evaluation/feedback forms from previous clients. It always helps to see what previous feedback has been and any good venue will have asked for and recorded feedback from its clients.



14 Can you provide joining instructions and a location map? Can you send these directly to the students?

Your attendees may not know where the venue is and how you get to it. Will you be sent joining instructions and if so is it possible for the venue to send them directly to the attendees?

15 Can you take messages for the instructor and delegates?

Inevitably there will be messages for both leaders and delegates. Check that the venue is willing to take these messages and that they have a system in place to ensure they are passed on promptly.

16 Do you provide administrative support? E.g. photocopying, faxing etc.

The 'best laid plans of mice and men' often need fine tuning at the end. So make sure the venue can provide photocopying and possibly email and fax facilities. You need to know that the venue you have chosen can support your event to your satisfaction, particularly if anything goes wrong or you need their assistance for any reason.

Ensure there are enough staff to carry out these duties, that they have suitable equipment (for instance a collating copier) and will be able to respond to requests to meet your timescales. Typical costs for photocopying are from 50p to £1 per sheet and faxes can be charged from £1 to £5 per sheet depending on the destination.

17 Do you have an internet café?

Easy access to the internet can be of great benefit to both instructors and students. Access to an internet café is an easy, hassle free way of achieving this.



3 TECHNICAL & IT SUPPORT



18 What happens if the data projector fails?

There is nothing worse than your event falling way behind schedule or having to be cancelled, simply because the venue you have chosen did not have any onsite technical staff that could assist you. Ideally the venue should have standby equipment to cover all eventualities.

19 Can you provide PC's? Network them? Install our own software?

Some of your events may need PC's to a high specification. Can the venue provide them? Is it possible for the PC's to be networked so they can talk to each other? What happens if you need your own software installed? Can you install it yourself or is there someone to do it for you?

20 Do you have technical support available on site?

What happens if there is a problem with the equipment that you have hired? Is there someone on site to help you out? Also is there someone on site to consult with regarding set-up of PC's and room set-up?

21 Can you provide internet access?

You may want your PC's to have internet access. Ask if this is possible. If connecting to the internet is crucial for your course, ask what back-up procedures they have in place if the internet connection fails.

22 Can we get access to the room before the course starts? In the evenings? At the week-end?

Before your event starts you may need access to the room. Make sure you can get access whenever you need it, either on



the morning of the event, in the evening or at the weekend and if so are there any charges for this?

23 Can the instructor get internet access and how much would it cost?

Even though the delegates may not need internet access, instructors may want to link their computers to the internet to collect email etc. Most venues charge for this service.

24 How much will technical support cost?

It is unlikely that the venue will provide unlimited technical support. Technical staff are expensive to employ and train, so check exactly what is included and what extra charges are involved.



4 LOCATION



QUESTIONS 25-28



25 How convenient are you to public transport?

If you have delegates arriving from near and far, it's important to have as many viable options for transport as possible.

26 Is car parking available, if so what is the cost?

It can be so infuriating that when your event is booked in the City Centre or on a business park, parking can be very restricted or costs the earth.

27 Are there any restaurants and pubs close by?

A modern business park may provide high quality space, but what other facilities are there nearby? Attendees enjoy a change of scene and the possibility to relax in a nearby pub or restaurant can be much appreciated.

28 What attractions and places of interest are nearby?

If delegates and guests are travelling from outside the area, it's always a good idea to choose a venue within easy reach of local attractions and events. Find out what you and your guests can do in the area during your stay or after your event.

5 FOOD & BEVERAGE



29 Can we get 'coffee on arrival'? Are biscuits included?

'You only get one chance to make a first impression' and that certainly applies to most events. Making the right first impression with delegates will ensure that your event gets off on the right foot and serving refreshments when the delegates arrive is always appreciated. Most venues will make an additional charge for 'coffee on arrival'.

30 What servings of tea and coffee are included?

Daily Delegate Rates are often not quite as inclusive as you would imagine. Two servings of tea/coffee may be included with an extra charge for biscuits. Additional servings will usually be charged for, including coffee after lunch.

31 Where will the coffee be served?

Ask where the coffee will be served - often this will be in your room. If that's the case, make sure there is enough room for your delegates to circulate. Also will setting up the coffee and clearing it away disturb your meeting?

Think carefully about the breaks in your event; would you rather have delegates away from your main room so that they can mingle and relax?

Some venues will serve coffee in the corridor; this means no interruption to your meeting whilst it is being set-up and cleared away. If you are offered coffee in a separate room, check if you are being charged for the room.

32 What type of meals can you provide?

Catering for events is probably one of the most contentious issues. Everybody has



different tastes and whilst you will never satisfy everybody, some careful planning can improve your chances of success. If your delegates are staying in a hotel overnight and are getting an evening meal, they may prefer a light lunch. Alternatively they may have left home early to get to the event and might prefer a more substantial meal.

Going outside of the venue for lunch can be a pleasant break, but getting everybody back in time to restart the afternoon session can be quite a challenge.

Most venues cater for vegetarians, but one or more of your delegates could well have special dietary requirements e.g. for a wheat intolerance or for Halal food. Check how the venue will handle this.

33 Will the food be served in the room?

Serving the food in your meeting room needs sufficient space and may involve interruption while it is set up and cleared away. Also if you are having hot food in the room, the residual smell may be off-putting during the afternoon session. Make sure you have considered these points before agreeing to have food served in the room.

34 Can I specify the times for breaks and lunch?

The venue may have to schedule in your requirements for breaks and lunch with other parts of their business. For instance, coach parties or associate lunches. Check that they will be able to serve lunch at the time that suits you best.

35 Can refreshments and lunch be served in a separate refreshment area?

Having a separate room for refreshments



and/or lunch can be a great idea, but may well involve an additional cost.

36 What if we need refills of coffee?

Running out of coffee or hot water is inconvenient. Check that the venue has staff available to attend to your needs promptly; again this may involve additional cost.

6 OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION



QUESTIONS 37-39



37 Is there a range of accommodation available?

To keep in line with the budget for your event it's always good for the venue to be able to offer a range of accommodation to suit individual needs.

38 Are the rates for the accommodation competitive?

For any event you should be offered a corporate rate for your accommodation requirements; don't be put off by a high 'rack rate' - push for a corporate rate.

39 Are rooms available during the busy times?

Every town/city has its busy period where accommodation is hard to come by and often very expensive. The venue should be able to offer a solution no matter what time of year.

7 EXTRA COSTS



QUESTIONS 40-47



This is probably the most contentious area with venue bookings. You think you've made an agreement that suits your budget and when the final invoice arrives you are horrified.

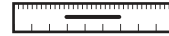
Don't get caught out by a cheap advertised price. Make sure that once you have agreed a price with a venue they stick to it and don't add on lots of extras.

Based on our experience of the market place the most common extras you should check before booking are:-

- 40 How much will you charge for a screen and flip chart?
- 41 What is the cost of additional flip chart paper?
- 42 Is mineral water included in the price?
- 43 How much do you charge for coffee on arrival?
- 44 How much are extra servings of tea and coffee?
- 45 How much do you charge for photocopying and faxes?
- 46 What is the cost of parking?
- 47 What is the charge for a separate refreshment area?

8

CALCULATING ROOM SIZES



So that you can get a clear idea of how spacious the room will be, we suggest that you take the floor area of the room and divide it by the number of delegates.

If you're working in metres, just multiply the answer by 10 to convert it to square feet. For example, if the room size is 50 square metres and you have 12 delegates, each delegate has just over 40 square feet each (50 divided by 12 multiplied by 10).

Now 35 is great for a room set-up in classroom style, in fact anything over 30 will be fine. If you want a U shaped layout (also called horseshoe) you'll need more space and we suggest that you look for at least 35 square feet per person.



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