



Tip Sheet



Creating a Welcome Story

A Welcome Story (sometimes referred to as a Visual Story or What-To-Expect Story) is a resource designed to provide people with accurate and useful information about what to expect when planning a stay at your accommodation.

? Why should accommodation providers create Welcome Stories?

They provide predictability for guests, which can help them feel more relaxed and confident about booking and staying with you. They can also be used by guests as a reminder or 'go-to' resource to check key information and feel reassured throughout their travel experience.

i What information is included in a Welcome Story?

A Welcome Story should consider the guest experience at every step of their journey. The guest journey begins during the travel planning and booking stages of a trip and concludes after the journey back home. A Welcome Story provides explicit written and visual information to support guests in knowing what to expect for each step in the journey and how to access additional support if needed.



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Creating your Welcome Story

- ▶ Use clear and concise language.
- ▶ Consider readability and font sizes.
- ▶ Use current photographs of the actual setting (wherever possible).
- ▶ Link to other resources or provide QR codes to learn more (e.g. maps, accessibility guides, menus, etc.). This will help to keep your Welcome Story concise and up to date.
- ▶ Make the Welcome Story easily accessible on your website.
- ▶ Consider having printed copies available at reception and/or in guest rooms.



Updating your Welcome Story

- ▶ Remember to update your Welcome Story if there are changes to any steps across the guest journey, or to the venue environment (e.g. facilities closed for maintenance or renovations, changes to operational procedures, new services, etc.).
- ▶ Consider having a handout of any updates or changes for guests on arrival. Ideally this information would be communicated ahead of time on your website and via guest emails. Unexpected changes can cause significant distress for neurodivergent travellers.
- ▶ Seek regular feedback on your Welcome Story from guests or other community members to assess effectiveness and to inform any changes.

The following sections provide key considerations for each stage of the guest journey and examples of what to include when creating a Welcome Story.



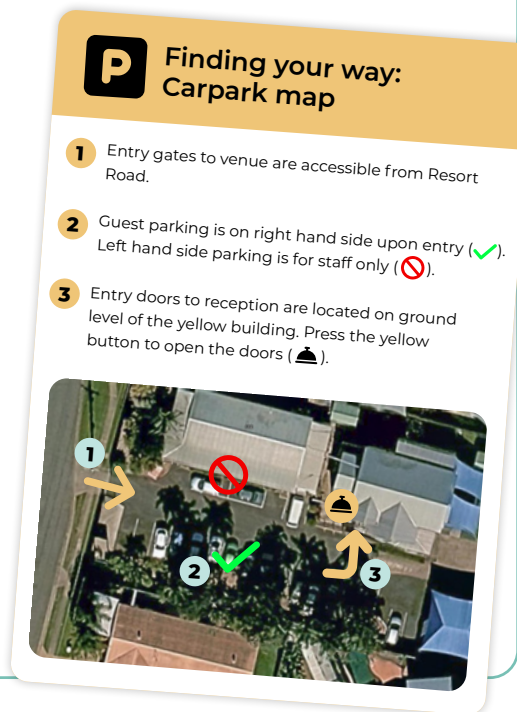
Journey Planning

Consider the steps involved

Finding the venue: Provide clear instructions to help guests find their way to your venue.

This might include:

- Street address
- Public transport options
- Maps
- Driving directions including maps
- Nearby landmarks.



Helpful tip!

Use pictures, icons, and other visuals to communicate information where possible.

Consider the environment

Parking options: Provide explicit information about parking options and clear instructions for finding the venue's reception from the carpark.

When onsite parking is provided, consider information on the following:

- Is there 24-hour access to carparks?
- Is a code or key required for access?
- Are parking bays allocated to guests or can guests choose where to park?
- How can guests make specific requests relating to parking bay allocations if required (e.g. parking close to lift access)?

Include visual information such as:

- Photos of the parking options and a carpark map.
- Link to a video tour of the carpark including access to lift/stairs and reception.

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Arrival & Check-in

Consider the steps involved

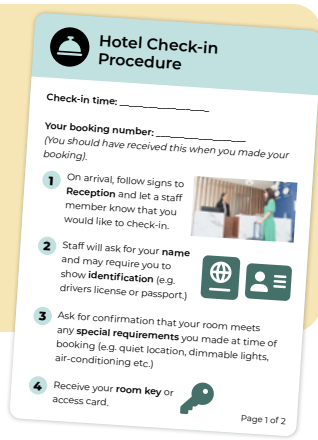
Check-in process:

- If you offer flexible check-in options, clearly outline these choices.
- Provide clear check-in instructions outlining each step of the procedure.
- The check-in procedure can be added directly into the Welcome Story.



Tip Sheet!

Access the *Creating a Check-in Procedure Tips* resource for more information.



Consider the environment



Reception or welcome area: It can be helpful to describe the space guests will first enter when arriving at your venue (e.g. office, reception, or lobby area). Descriptions should include the sensory elements of the space as well as pictures or a video tour where possible.

The combination of multiple sensations at once can make an environment particularly challenging to navigate. Adding predictability about what to expect in these spaces supports and empowers guests to be prepared. Below are a few examples of common sensory experiences upon arrival:



Sounds

Music
Others talking
Traffic noise
Luggage trolleys
Elevator bells/
music
Bathroom
hand driers



Touch

Incidental touch
from others
queuing



Sights

Bright lights
Reflective
surfaces (e.g.
mirrors/tiles)
Artworks or
lighting displays
Glass walls



Smells

'Signature scent'
diffusers/candles
Food smells
from cafes or
restaurants
Perfumes
and cologne



Movement

Crowds/queues
at peak times
Room access
only via elevator

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During
the Stay



Helpful tip!

To keep the Welcome Story concise, it is recommended to indicate, link, or provide a QR code to where guests can find this information rather than including it all in the Welcome Story.

Consider the steps involved

Using accommodation facilities:

- Include venue maps or links to access online.
- Identify opening and closing times for facilities (e.g. restaurants, pool area, reception, games room, carpark, etc.). Be specific, people may interpret 'open til late' differently (avoid ambiguity).
- Outline or link to any venue rules or expectations (e.g. no glass in pool area or phones silenced in the day spa).
- Provide information on how to access hard copy or online menus.
- Describe how to use lifts (e.g. do you need to swipe an access card before selecting floor level?). This could also be linked to as a separate 'How to' document.
- Provide any information specific to the type of room/ booking (e.g. breakfast included, requires use of shared bathroom on level 2, etc.).
- Describe any options for customising the room (e.g. Is there a choice of pillows or bedding? Adjustable lighting or aircon? How do guests action any special requests?).
- Provide information on how to access step-by-step instructions for the use of any in-room facilities (e.g. coffee machine, TV, aircon, washing machine, oven etc.).

Using your TV remote



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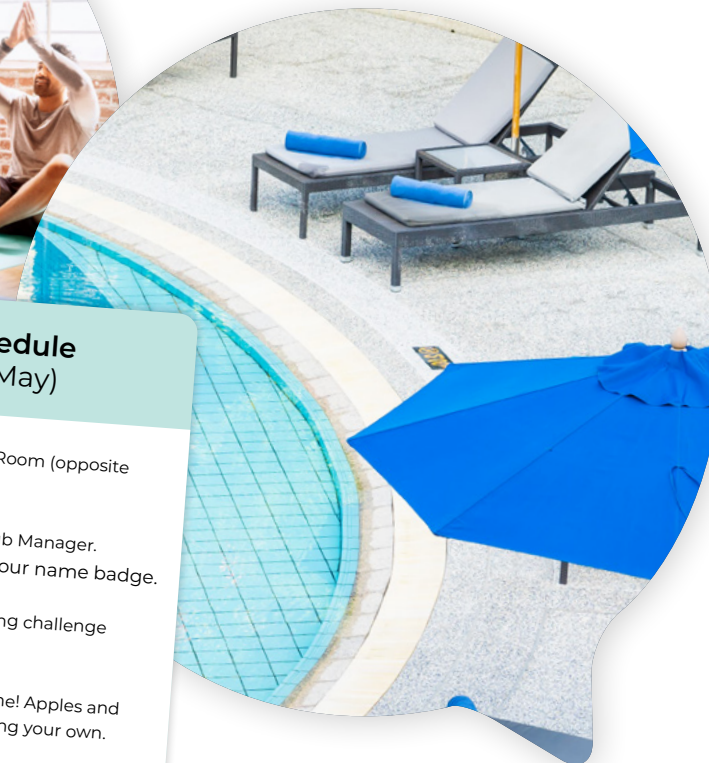
Consider the environment

Activities and events: Include information about specific services or activities on offer. This might include links more details or timetables for:

- Kids club/child minding services
- Day spa session times
- Tours and activities
- Special events.

Information to highlight for activities might include:

- Date and time.
- Who the activity is suitable for (e.g. age requirements).
- How to book the service.
- If the activity is included or if there are additional costs (and how to pay).
- Links to additional information and visual supports about the activity or event (e.g. a visual schedule of what will happen and when).



Kids Club Schedule (Monday 19th May)



9:00am: Meet in Games Room (opposite pool entrance).



Meet Lilly the Kids Club Manager. Find and decorate your name badge.



Participate in a Lego building challenge in groups or individually.



10:30am: Morning tea time! Apples and fruit juice provided or bring your own.



Outside activity: Mini golf (please pack a hat and sunscreen!)



12:30pm: Lunch time! Sandwiches and fruit provided or bring your own.



Your choice of activity until **pick up time at 3:00pm** in the Games Room.

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Leaving & Check-out

Helpful tip!
Use pictures, icons, and other visuals to communicate information where possible.

Consider the steps involved

Check-out process:

- Clearly outline options for check-out (e.g. early check out the night before, contactless, key drop etc.).
- Step guests through the check-out process using the same concepts outlined in the *Creating a Check-in Procedure Tips* resource.
- Provide information or link to local transport options to support the journey home.

Hotel Check-out Procedure

Check-out time: 10:00am

- 1 Upon exiting your room, go to the reception front desk. Make sure you have all your belongings.
- 2 Let staff know your name and that you would like to check-out.
- 3 Return your room key or access card.

Consider the environment

Reception or lobby area: Provide information about what to expect at checkout and departure.

- Describe the sensory environment (e.g. sounds, sights, smells, touch, and movement).
- Highlight any options for avoiding peak busy times at check-out for guests to avoid sensory overwhelm.
- Provide or link to a map to support exiting the venue.



Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:



Scan QR code for more AccommodateUs Toolkit resources designed to reduce barriers and create inclusive venues.

- Email:** communityinclusion@autismqld.com.au
- Phone:** (07) 3273 0000
- Website:** autismqld.com.au

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