

A low-angle shot of a modern hotel building with a grid of windows and a large 'HOTEL' sign on the roof.

HOTEL

The Revinate logo, which is a stylized white diamond shape.

REVINATE

How to respond to negative hotel reviews

Use negative hotel reviews as an opportunity to improve.

Hotel guests have high expectations. They don't just want a good stay — they want an exceptional one. And they're prepared to do some serious research to ensure the best possible experience by reading online reviews.

Travel reviews have become even more important over time. In fact, [research from Tripadvisor](#) shows that 81% of travelers always or frequently read reviews before booking a trip. That same survey also reveals that guests are more likely to book the hotel with the higher rating when choosing between two identical properties.

So, what should you do when you're faced with negative hotel reviews? Responding is actually your best course of action. You're about to discover not only why responding to negative hotel reviews is critical, but also how to do it — complete with some examples.

What you will see here

The importance of responding to negative hotel reviews

How to respond to negative hotel reviews

Negative review response examples

When to respond to negative hotel reviews

Communicate with guests all throughout their journeys

The importance of responding to negative hotel reviews

Even properties with stellar ratings inevitably receive a negative review here and there. It's simply a reality in the hospitality business, especially when you consider that research from J.D. Power shows hotel guest satisfaction has declined by 8 points since 2021.

While receiving negative reviews is unpleasant, it's important to respond. Doing so can actually make a world of difference. Why? Because there's a clear correlation between responsiveness and high ratings. It's also what guests have come to expect.

According to a report from Expedia, 91% of travelers say property owners and managers should reply to negative reviews — courteous replies improve their impressions.

The message is clear that not only do hoteliers need to respond to negative reviews, but also that doing so in the right way is crucial.

Having a bad review on sites like Tripadvisor hurts your reputation. But a proper response to a bad review can minimize the damage to your reputation and repair your relationship with unhappy reviewers.

You want to show prospective guests that your hotel reads, internalizes, and responds to reviews.

This means you should personalize messages while also keeping your brand voice in mind. You should also research the issue before you respond so that you are aware of as many details of the guest's stay as possible.

Did the guest complain before check-out? Is there a record of his or her communications with your staff? With this information, you can begin crafting your response.

How to respond to negative hotel reviews



1. THANK THE GUEST BY NAME

Even if the negative review is aggressive or hurtful, you should thank the guest for taking the time to give feedback using their name in the introduction. Speaking directly to them shows that you took the time to read their review carefully.

Also, take a minute to remember that all feedback is valuable. And if you handle the situation gracefully, it can mitigate the effects of the bad review in the eyes of your prospective guests.

2. APOLOGIZE FOR THE GUEST'S POOR EXPERIENCE

Remember, an apology is not an admission of guilt or wrongdoing. For whatever reason, this guest's expectations were not met, which is disappointing for anybody. You should express that you're sorry their experience fell short of expectation.

3. HIGHLIGHT ANY CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE (OR INTEND TO MAKE)

Keep in mind that the full conversation with this guest doesn't have to occur solely on the review platform. This is a good opportunity to take the conversation offline to avoid further public conflict.

If the situation warrants conveying any changes that you have made or will make, you can simply invite the guest to contact you directly so you can make it right. Be sure to provide the best email address for getting in touch.

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4. EVALUATE THE NEED FOR FOLLOW UP

You'll have to determine whether following up is warranted, but it may be necessary in some instances. If you have the guest's contact information, you can leverage personalized communications with an email that expresses your apologies. If appropriate, you can also offer compensation.

Lastly, take the time to ask the following questions about the review:

- Did this guest experience a systemic problem that more customers could face?
- Is there an easy fix to the problem?
- Is the problem unfounded or not likely to be repeated?
- Is the problem linked to something you cannot easily change, such as infrastructure or design?



If you're new to crafting review responses — or if you just want some tips — the next few pages have some examples.

Negative review response examples

Dear Patrice,

Thank you very much for your candid review of your recent stay at our hotel. Your feedback is extremely valuable to us, as we strive to improve with each and every stay. I greatly appreciate your comments about aspects of the room that need updating.

It is a pleasure to announce that we will be implementing many of these upgrades to the property within the next couple of months. Our rooms will be getting new mattresses, bed skirts, window treatments, carpeting, in-room accessories, and much more! In taking great care of our charming hotel, our main priority is to be able to offer a very well-maintained and comfortable atmosphere.

I hope that I can convince you to change your mind about another visit to our property. Please reach out to me directly at [email] if you would be willing to give us a chance to turn your experience around. It would be such a pleasure to personally welcome you back to our new and improved hotel!

With much appreciation,

Elanor L. | General Manager

Everything this manager says indicates to both the reviewer, and any prospective guests who might read the review, that the General Manager truly cares about the guest experience.

Although she is unable to fix all the issues immediately, she takes care in highlighting the aspects of the hotel that are getting an update.

This is a great way to mitigate any damage to your reputation and potentially repair your relationship with an unhappy guest.

Negative review response examples

Let's consider another scenario, one where the guest writes a negative review despite your efforts to do everything you can to remedy the situation. Your next objective should be damage control.

You need to show any potential guests who see the review that you've done everything possible to resolve the issue. Don't get defensive — keep it professional.

Dear James,

Thank you again for bringing this issue to our attention. The safety and security of our guests is always our top priority. As discussed in our previous conversations, our team has done everything possible — in cooperation with the Cincinnati Police Department — to investigate your claim. I am so sorry that we have not been able to resolve this. Please feel free to reach out to me directly at [email] if you have additional information to share.

Kind regards,

Jim L | General Manager

This response shows that the General Manager has taken the review seriously and has already made multiple attempts to resolve the issue.

For prospective guests, this is a sign that the hotel has gone above and beyond to ensure a positive experience.

When to respond to negative hotel reviews

While you don't want to reply to a negative review before you have the necessary context, you do need to be prompt.

Once you've researched the details of the guest's stay, you should respond to negative hotel reviews swiftly. In fact, you should respond to 100% of negative reviews within 24 hours.

Responding as quickly as possible is one more step you can take to repair the relationship with your unhappy guest. It will also minimize the number of prospective guests that see the review online without your response.

It's also helpful to leverage a [guest feedback solution](#) with consolidated reputation management, guest surveys, and best-in-class reporting. With a tool like this, you can efficiently and effectively manage all your online reviews from one place.

Negative hotel reviews are tough. They can be hurtful, especially when you work hard to exceed guests' expectations each and every day.

The good news is they can even provide you with opportunities to build your reputation. And hopefully, you now have a better handle on how to respond to negative hotel reviews.

Now that you have a better understanding of how to respond to negative hotel reviews, you might want to consider how else you can step up your communications across the entire guest journey.

This is far easier if you have a [Guest Data Platform](#) that aggregates all your guests' data. With this information readily available, you can customize communications at every stage to help drive direct bookings and revenue.

About Revinate

Revinate empowers hoteliers to connect directly with guests at every touchpoint to deliver delightful experiences and drive direct revenue. Our data platform and guest communication solutions put hoteliers in control of every step of their guests' journeys - initial research, booking, check-in, throughout the stay, and even after check-out. We do this using the communication channels that the guests prefer, whether it's voice, text, email, or through the web.

More than 12,000 hotels bank on Revinate to power unforgettable guest experiences and drive direct revenue.

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