

QUESTIONS-AND-ANSWERS LIST FROM THE DWHSA SUMMER SCHOOL

Part 2: From Contracts Through Guest Reservations

Thanks for sticking with us through Part 2 of this training program! We collected the questions you submitted during the live Zoom on Sept. 10, 2025, or you sent to us at support@dwhsa.com. (Please keep sending us anything you want to ask about!)

We had 4 questions that were directed specifically to our speakers, Elsa and Cheryl, and we've asked them to help us answer those. We'll include their answers in the final Q&A list after the final Zoom on Sept. 17. Thanks again for your interest in DWs!

Q. Could you share your agency web sites? I'd love to get inspired!

A. Cheryl's agency is <https://www.yellowumbrellaevents.com/>. Elsa's DW agency is <https://www.esdtravels.com/signatureweddingsaway>. (Please remember to send any questions you may have for us to support@dwhsa.com instead of the speakers' individual agencies - thanks!)

Q. Do you give guests an arbitrary deadline by which to book? I'm not talking about the dates on the suppliers' contracts, but instead dates you've given guests to encourage them to book early. For example, I told guests to book by July 1 for a February 2026 wedding just to get them to book early.

A. As long as you're ultimately abiding by the deadline dates in the supplier's contracts, you can typically tell guests any booking and payment deadline dates you want. Most commonly, DWHSA members will "pad" the important dues dates - initial bookings and deposits, any interim payments, and final payments - by one or two weeks to give them extra time if a guest's credit card doesn't work or someone is out of town and late paying (e.g., the final payment deadline is July 1, but you tell them it's June 15). But, we also have members who give guests a 90-day window after the group room block contracts have been signed to place deposits to hold their rooms at the group rates; after that deadline, the agents quote FIT/rack rates to guests, not the group rate. Doing this allows the agents to return unused rooms so the couples won't be in danger of paying attrition penalties. As long as you obey the final deadlines in the suppliers' contracts, you can set booking and payment deadlines as you wish.

Q. Does DWHSA have any service fee and wedding contract samples on its web site?

A. Yes, we do! We have several great examples in our Resource Center that members are allowed to use. (Once this class ends, we'll share details about discounted dues rates to join DWHSAs if you're interested.)

Q. Do you have sample wedding contracts for New York state?

A. Any sample/template contracts we have for members will be general enough to work in different states and provinces, but they won't always be 100 percent perfect for the laws in the individual state/province where you might be based. So, we always recommend as Cheryl did today that you find a reputable local business lawyer who can take our samples and edit them to fit the rules where you live.

Q. Does DWHSAs recommend any attorneys with specific knowledge about travel and about DWs?

A. Our members work with several great attorneys who emphasize travel law in their practices: Glinnesa Gaillard (<https://www.gaillardlaw.com/>), Tom Carpenter (<https://www.carpenterlawgroupcc.com/>), Mark Pestronk (<https://pestronk.com/>), and Jeff Ment (<https://www.mentlaw.com/>) in the United States and Doug Crozier (<https://hclaw.com/>) in Canada, among others.

Q. Do you share or issue a supplier reservation confirmation to guests? (I'm asking since the supplier version might show the actual due dates, not the ones you as the agent might have "padded" a bit.)

A. Most DWHSAs members do issue their own booking confirmation forms/receipts to guests instead of forwarding the suppliers' confirmations directly to these travelers - for the very reason you mentioned! Typically, they'll use forms available through their CRMs to create those confirmation notices to send out.

Q. When do you actually go through contracts with your clients and explain everything? Is it after you've collected your service/planning fees, during the proposal process, or during a separate meeting?

A. Generally, there are two times for reviewing contracts with couples and guests. For your client agreement (the contract between the couple and you that we discussed in Part 1), you should give that to clients after your consultation but before you begin any research or prepare a proposal. Collect that signed contract first (along with your service/planning fees) before you start work on the proposal! Then, with wedding date and group room block contracts, many members do schedule a time to go through those agreements with couples so they understand their obligations. (Some agents will use a tool like Loom to record a video of them explaining those contracts and give the video link to couples along with the contracts so they can watch later.)

Q. When you go over the clients' responsibilities in your contracts, how do you explain those things so you feel confident they understand things such as chargebacks and cancellation fees?

A. It really pays off later if you can schedule a time with the couple (in person, on Zoom, etc.) to walk through the basics of the contract. Many members will do this on Zoom, for example, while recording that call; then, they'll give the couple a link to the video. Another great tip is asking the couple to initial the really important clauses in the contract (e.g., payment deadlines, attrition penalties) so they can't claim later they never read those provisions.

Q. Do you require individual DW guests to sign your terms and conditions/client agreement before you reserve their DW rooms/trips?

A. While many members do not require individual DW guests to sign a separate client agreement (only the DW couples), some members do have a shorter client agreement/terms and conditions form for guests that will cover the basic terms that affect guests (e.g., payment deadlines, a "bad guest behavior" clause).

Q. What tool do you use for sending out RSVPs?

A. If you'd like your couples to send out an early RSVP notice to get a better estimate for attendance, you can use many different tools such as survey programs such as Survey Monkey (though your email services company such as Flodesk or MailChimp may include surveys as part of the monthly fee you're paying already!). Another option is a digital invitation service such as Evite.

Q. I ask my clients to ask their guests what kinds of room types they might actually prefer and then put those answers on a Google spreadsheet. I have couples do this before I put rooms into the contracts to try to avoid asking for different room types after contacting the suppliers. Is that crazy?

A. This sounds like a very effective way to get a more accurate count for attendance! It's extra effort on your part, but it should give you a better picture of what guests want before you request the number of rooms in specific categories for the group block.

Q. If you want to block, say, a group of 20 rooms, how can you decide how many different room categories you should request (and how many individual rooms in each category)?

A. If you don't do an early survey as mentioned in the questions above, you'll need to make your best guess with the couple's help. Take the guest list and think first about the people who are almost guaranteed to take those 20 rooms (e.g., wedding party members, parents). Decide the room categories they'll need (e.g., a single room because they'll travel alone or with partners, or a double room because they're splitting

costs). With the rooms that are left in the 20 count, look at the remaining guest list and make your best guess about room categories.

Q. What did the speakers mean when they talked about a promo code instead of a contract?

A. Contracted group room blocks set aside empty rooms on the chosen DW dates - those rooms are guaranteed for the DW group and cannot be booked by other resort guests. However, many suppliers also offer "flex code" or "promo code" arrangements in which empty rooms are not taken out of the property's inventory and set aside for the wedding group. Instead, the supplier gives your couple a code or link guests may use to book their rooms at the best available discounted rate. There's a big tradeoff - the couple isn't signing a contract guaranteeing rooms (so they won't be liable for unused rooms), but guests who book late may find no rooms available if other guests (outside the DW group) have booked them already.

Q. What software/apps/tools do you use for CRMs? For itinerary building? For creating wedding web sites?

A. Many DWHSA members use the major travel agency CRM systems, including VacationCRM, TERN, and TESS. TravelJoy and Travefy are leading itinerary builders. (And, remember that some of these tools can be both your CRM and your itinerary builder in one.) For wedding web sites, there are many options out there, but DWHSA recommends AppyCouple.com.

Q. How do your DW guests book their rooms - directly with the hotel or through your agency (you collect their payments through your agency and then send room payments from your agency's bank account)?

A. Most of the time, you'll use a credit-card-safe form (provided by the supplier or created with your CRM or forms software) to collect the guests' payment information. Then, that information will be sent on to the supplier generally so that company will make the charges on the guests' cards. You should avoid charging guests' cards for their travel costs using your own agency's credit card merchant account such as PayPal or Square, because you could be liable later if a guest does a chargeback. (You can use those accounts of course to charge your service/planning fees separately.)

Q. How can you create a DW landing page that's "bookable" (guests can go there and reserve their rooms cabins on that page)?

A. If you're simply collecting booking details without processing credit/debit card payments, then you can use any online form building tool (e.g., your web site's form builder, a form built with software that's part of your email services vendor such as MailChimp, or a form built with your CRM's tools). But, if you need to collect guests' credit/debit card information on that same form, it's very important that you talk to your

CRM or the forms software company you're using (e.g., JotForm) to make sure the form is coded and structured to accept and store card data safely (i.e., it's "PCI compliant").

Q. Do you add any processing fees or other service fees to the guests' room rates?

A. In the vast majority of cases, the suppliers you work with - tour operators, resort companies, and cruise lines - will actually process the charges on your couples' and guests' credit/debit cards, so they will absorb any merchant fees and related expenses of collecting those funds. So, generally, you won't need to add extra fees for your agency. The only exception might be working with a hotel or destination management company (DMC) in another country that offers you "net" rates (commission-free rates onto which you can add your own extra fees that will serve as your commission income).

Q. Is there a way we can make an appointment to chat with Elsa or Cheryl?

A. Because they're so busy running their agencies, members like Elsa and Cheryl generally can't offer 1:1 mentoring help to other members. (That's why we offer programs like the Summer School, so we can help lots of agents all at once!)

Q. How many weddings do you average a year? What is the average number of rooms in your room blocks?

A. Combined, the six high-volume DWHSA members helping us in the DWHSA Summer School this year book and manage more than 1,000 DW groups annually. (While they still work directly with many couples, they've also built teams of virtual assistants, employees, and contractors to help them of course!) But, you don't have to grow that fast to earn a good living in this niche - we have many DWHSA members who book six to 12 DW groups a year and feel happy with their earnings. These days, after the pandemic, we find that the typical DW group involves 30 to 40 guests, so usually that would mean 15 to 25 rooms (singles and doubles generally).