

Strategic Group Contracting

Purpose of This Training

This training teaches a strategic, win-win approach to group contracting—especially for wedding groups—that helps agents book more rooms, reduce pricing issues, and eliminate penalty risk by making three simple adjustments:

1. Hold the right block
2. Set the right deadlines
3. Release rooms properly

Step 1 — Hold the Right Room Block

Room Block Estimating Formula:

ESTIMATING THE ROOM BLOCK

- Learn the total number of guests *invited*
- Appx 50% of invited guests will attend. e.g., 100 guests invited, about 50 will attend, so contract 25 rooms.
- Educate the client, reassure them

100 = 50 = 25
invited attending rooms

Room Block Setup Rules:

- Keep block dates to 5 nights MAX (most guests book 3–4 nights).
- No more than 5 room categories.
- Most guests book the lowest-priced room—including limited upgrades (swim up, club level, ocean view).
- Only include specialty suites if the couple requests them.
- The agent sets the room block—couples don't understand the inventory strategy.

Why this is a Win-Win-Win:

- Agent wins: more availability later, fewer pricing issues, fuller blocks.
- Hotel wins: less inventory unnecessarily held, better projections, and less discounting.
- Couple wins: smaller deposits up front, reduced risk.

Step 2 — Set a Booking Window (“Book By Date”)

What it does:

Creates urgency so guests book earlier (better rates + better inventory), reduces price-matching requests, helps hotel partners resell unbooked inventory, and provides the couple with a clearer guest count for wedding planning.

How to set it:

- Set to approximately 200 days before travel when possible.
- Choose a deadline that fits your workflow; avoid holidays and weekends.

Simple rule to use:

- Most groups: Booking Deadline \approx 90 days from contract signing.
- Weddings more than 18 months out: Booking Deadline \approx 11 months before travel.

Step 3 — Final Payment Strategy

Core principle:

All rooms should be paid in full before any additional deposits, cancellations, or attrition/reduction dates occur.

Final Payment Date rule:

Final Payment Date = 135 days before travel

Best practices:

- Avoid weekends and holidays.
- Schedule around your own calendar so you can manage your workload.
- Guests/couples don't see TO deadlines—agents must control timing

Step 4 — Release Unbooked Rooms & Nights

Release all unused inventory within a few days after the Booking Window ends.

How to do it:

- Use ALG's auto-drop feature.
- Set reminders so it never gets missed.
- Communicate the approaching deadline to guests in advance.

After the deadline:

- Some guests will still book late—quote current FIT rates.
- Hotels may allow a percentage of rooms to be added back at the original group rate.

Contract Knowledge You Must Understand

1) Wedding Date Contract (Couple + Resort)

- The agent should obtain a copy and confirm:
 - Wedding date/time/venues
 - Outside guest policy (ask resort to add one if missing)

Outside Guest Policy script (guest-facing):

"Please know that many resorts require guests to reserve rooms within the couple's block. Resorts often impose a fee of at least \$100 to attend the wedding events for guests who do not book within the couple's room block. To avoid unnecessary fees and to be kind to the couple, please book here. Thank you!"

2) Tour Operator Contract (Agent + Tour Operator)

- Print it, highlight it, and read it word-for-word every time—terms change often.
- Never send the Tour Operator contract to clients.
- Invest in a travel attorney and use your own branded client contract template.

Deadline Rules + Group Management Checklist

- Avoid holiday deadlines (no deadlines from Dec 15 – Jan 10).
- Build consistent processes for reminders, payment plans, and late fees.
- Create a reliable reminder/communication system for guests.
- Track all TO deadlines with a reliable internal system.
- Provide rooming lists/reminders to the couple 30 days prior to the booking deadline.

- Don't wait until the last moment to release space.
- Respond to price match/member rate issues using Outside Guest wording.
- Watch room counts carefully—avoid crossing into penalties.
- Only add rooms after the booking deadline if you have names.
- Follow procedures for escalations/deviations (don't jump ahead)