



## Little Black Dress

Housekeepers are central to the hotel industry. They keep the property clean and guests comfortable. Research shows that one-tenth of a second is all it takes for a guest to form an initial impression<sup>1</sup>. This means that each detail is important, including staff uniforms, to attract and retain guests.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://apium.ca/blogs/news/5-reasons-your-employee-uniforms-matter-to-hotel-guests>

## Uniforms over time<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>

The word 'uniform' comes from the Latin unus (meaning one), and forma (meaning form). The first recorded uniforms date back to the Middle Ages when they were not full outfits, but badges worn on regular clothing by people who worked for a high-class family, or in the services such as the army. The different badges enabled people to quickly identify a person's rank and authority, as well as which employer they worked for.

With the advent of fabric technology, mass textile production became possible, giving rise to the use of liveries, special clothes worn by messengers and servants that bore the insignia and/or colors of the house that they belonged to.

The first wide-scale use of compulsory uniforms for a profession is credited to King Frederick II who reigned in Germany in 1785. He decreed that all postal staff should wear a uniform made of blue coats with orange collars and cuffs featuring badges and other accessories such as epaulettes to distinguish between roles.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, uniforms had been introduced for state employees across much of Europe. As the church and aristocracy were falling out of favour, uniforms were used to symbolise the start of a new era. Shortly after, uniforms were adopted across all government bodies such as the police, firefighters, government departments, etc.

As a result of the first world war, civil uniforms were regarded as a symbol of an authoritarian state, and many disappeared completely. Even when the German Nazi regime began its rise decades later, civil uniforms were not reintroduced.

After both World Wars, only a few civil sectors still wore uniforms including the police, railway staff and postal workers. During the latter half of the century, uniforms continued to move away from military-style features and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://resortbasics.com/blogs/news/the-evolution-of-hotel-uniforms-a-brief-history>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wiseworksafe.com/blog/view/the-history-of-corporate-uniforms>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sparklerental.com/the-history-of-uniforms/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/history-uniforms-ann-dowdeswell/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.housekeepinguniforms.com/blogs/news/housekeeping-uniforms-through-the-ages#:~:text=The%20attire%20of%20the%20Victorian,not%20render%20the%20clothing%20ruined.>

focused on corporate wear, allowing companies to dress their employees in a way that represented their business and brand.

Nowadays, uniforms are becoming more comfortable and functional, moving away from traditional corporate styles.

## **Hotel Industry**

In the early days of inns, housekeepers wore basic dresses and aprons designed for practicality. These outfits were built to last, with sturdy fabrics that could withstand daily use.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as hotels became more popular, housekeeping attire became more formal. Housekeepers traded in their simple dresses for longer ones adorned with lace and ruffles, reflecting the fashion trends of the time. Despite this move, practicality remained a priority. Housekeepers continued to wear aprons and had pockets for carrying essentials.

In the modern era, hotel chains began using uniforms to establish their brand identity. Housekeeping dresses started featuring company colors and logos. New fabrics that were more comfortable to wear for long shifts and easier to care for were developed. Stain-resistant, antimicrobial, and wrinkle-free fabrics became popular choices. This ensured that staff looked and felt their best while on duty. These innovations improved the comfort and functionality of housekeeping uniforms. It also contributed to the professionalism and efficiency of hotel operations.

## Importance of uniforms<sup>8,9,10</sup>

Research shows that uniforms play an important role in building brand awareness and in improving job satisfaction, hotel operations, and staff-management relationships.

Uniforms also matter for guests and employees.

- *Professionalism.* Wearing a uniform offers a sense of trust to customers, knowing that everyone in the hotel is following certain guidelines and requirements.
- *Dressing appropriately.* Supervisors are relieved of having to enforce dress codes and make judgments about clothes worn by employees.
- *Customer service.* Uniforms help hotel guests identify staff. A guest never wanders around with unanswered questions because they can easily and confidently identify hotel staff.
- *Sense of unity among the hotel team.* Employees that wear a uniform are more likely to feel valued, professional, and equal.

## Fun Fact<sup>11</sup>

*Where did the stereotype of the slinky French maid uniform originate?*

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Paris' Can-Can dancers were considered scandalous and often led to the shutdown of nightclubs because of "public nudity". It became an American cliché to stage a parody featuring an unlucky young French housekeeper in scanty clothing finding herself in compromising situations, her dress a skimpy version of the black and white outfit of a French housekeeper. It was just bold enough to titillate audiences without getting closed by censors, and the character of the French maid remained long enough to become responsible for the universal outfit with the same name 😊.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://hrcak.srce.hr/283696>

<sup>9</sup> <https://apium.ca/blogs/news/5-reasons-your-employee-uniforms-matter-to-hotel-guests>

<sup>10</sup> <https://thinkuniforms.co.nz/important-uniforms-in-hospitality-industry/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/62248/where-did-french-maid-outfit-come>

Whether wearing a uniform or casual clothes, housekeepers are **the face behind guests comfort**. Unfortunately, guests are less and less likely to carry cash on them and, therefore, to tip staff. This is why offering an electronic tipping solution like **Tip&Go** is a win-win solution, making it easier for guests to reward housekeepers for their hard work 😊.

**Francis Léonard, CEO**

**TIP&GO®**

**Clip:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZ75L0Xplb0>

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