

THE CABIN STEWARD'S PLAYBOOK



*The Words to Say and the Things to Ask For From
the First Evening to the Last Morning*

CABIN RULES

THE WORDS TO SAY

OFFICIAL SOURCES



GRACE DELGADO

ALMOST THIRTY YEARS OF CLEANING THE SAME TWENTY CABINS

The Special Needs Form and Its Deadline

The form nobody mentions at booking decides what is already waiting in your cabin on the first evening. Send it early, keep the reply, and carry a copy.

THE RULE

Anything you need placed in the cabin before you arrive goes on the line's special needs form, sent at booking and no later than the line's own deadline: 30 days before sailing on Royal Caribbean and Celebrity, and 60 days for the Princess Mobility Questionnaire. Until a confirmation comes back, nobody aboard has heard you.

WHO IT CATCHES

The first-timer who assumes the steward can produce anything on the first evening. The repeat cruiser who had a shower stool last time and expects the ship to remember. The couple where one partner filled in the form for themselves and forgot the other. And everyone who booked late, saw the deadline had passed, and never asked whether it was still worth sending.

30 days

the latest Royal Caribbean and Celebrity want the form before sailing

60 days

the Princess Mobility Questionnaire deadline

48 hours

when Royal Caribbean says a personal reply should reach you

What the form actually does

From the cabin side of the door, the special needs form is a list. It arrives with the cabin numbers before the ship fills, and it tells the housekeeping team which cabins need something set out before the guests walk in. A shower stool, a raised toilet seat, a small refrigerator, a sharps container, a bottle of distilled water by the bed. If your cabin is on that list, the item is there when you open the door. If it is not, the item is something you ask for, and asking on the first afternoon means asking at the same hour as everybody else.

Royal Caribbean's form is explicit about what it covers in the cabin. Its stateroom section lists a raised toilet seat, a mini-refrigerator, a commode chair, a sharps container and a shower stool, and for a CPAP or BiPAP machine it promises that distilled water and an extension cord will be provided in the stateroom. Celebrity's form carries the same stateroom checkboxes.

The form is not a medical record and it is not a contract. It is how you put your name on equipment before the ship sails, and the steward reads it the same way: the cabins on the list get set up first.

The deadlines, line by line

Royal Caribbean and Celebrity use the same wording: send the form at the time of booking, and no later than 30 days before sailing, with sign language interpreting due 60 days before. Princess runs on a longer clock. If you bring mobility equipment or have booked Princess transfers, hotels, Cruisetours or excursions, its Mobility Questionnaire is due at least 60 days before sailing, and the line says notice that far ahead helps it have items ready.

Carnival does not use one form. It asks you to complete every applicable Pre-Cruise Form, one per need: oxygen and CPAP, diabetes and medical storage, wheelchair assistance, mobility devices, hearing and vision. If you need an airport transfer with a hydraulic lift, it wants to know no later than 14 days before sailing.

LINE	WHAT TO SEND	DEADLINE THE LINE PUBLISHES	WHERE IT GOES
Royal Caribbean	Guest Special Needs Form	At booking, no later than 30 days before sailing; interpreters 60 days	special_needs@rccl.com
Celebrity	Guest Special Needs Form	At booking, no later than 30 days before sailing; interpreters 60 days	special_needs@celebrity.com
Princess	Mobility Questionnaire, plus Access Office email for hearing and vision	At least 60 days before sailing	accessofficeprincess@princesscruises.com
Carnival	One Pre-Cruise Form per need	Complete all that apply; lift-equipped transfers 14 days	Forms on Carnival's special needs pages
Norwegian, Holland America, MSC	Each line's own accessibility request	Not confirmed for this edition	Check the line's accessibility page before booking

Deadlines as each line publishes them. Where a line is marked not confirmed, read its own accessibility page before you rely on any date.

The confirmation is the step people skip

Royal Caribbean says that once your request is received you will get an automated confirmation within 24 hours and a personal response within 48 hours. If neither comes, it tells you to email special_needs@rccl.com or telephone its access team. Silence is not a yes. Silence usually means the form went nowhere.

Celebrity's Access Department takes the same kind of follow-up by telephone, fax or email, and will also deal with a travel agent on your behalf. Use whichever you will actually do this week.

Print the reply. Put it in the carry-on with your medication. On the first evening, the printed email is the fastest way to show a steward exactly what was promised to your cabin, and the steward can take it straight to the supervisor if anything is missing.

Is it too late? Usually not, but say it plainly

The most common question I hear about this form is whether it is still worth sending once the deadline has passed. Send it anyway. A late form is a request with less certainty, not a request refused.

Be honest with yourself about what lateness costs. Celebrity's form warns that not every disability or dietary request can be accommodated, and that accessible staterooms are subject to availability. Carnival assigns its accessible cabins within each category first come, first served. Equipment that must be loaded, or a cabin that must be swapped, is exactly what a late request can lose.

What a late form still does is put your name on paper before you board. On the first afternoon, the guest who can say the form went in last week gets a different answer from the guest who is asking for the first time.

What to write so the right thing arrives

Celebrity says it does not need to know the extent of a disability, but the more it knows, the better it can meet the need. Take that literally. Write what you need and why it matters in the cabin: a shower stool because standing in the shower is not safe, a refrigerator because insulin must stay cold, distilled water because a CPAP runs every night.

If you travel with a wheelchair or scooter, Celebrity's form asks for its width, length, height and weight in inches and pounds. Measure it before you sit down to the form, not from memory.

Fill in one form for each person in the cabin who needs something. The second traveler is the one who gets missed, because the person doing the paperwork checks their own needs carefully and lists the other's from memory.

Hearing, vision and the separate desk

Princess sends sign language, service animal, vision and hearing requests to its Access Office by email rather than through the Mobility Questionnaire. A guest who fills in only the mobility form and expects a hearing kit has used the wrong door.

On every line, read the form to the end before you send it. The checkbox you need is often on the last page, below the mobility questions.

| WORKED EXAMPLE

A couple book a Royal Caribbean sailing five weeks before departure. One of them sleeps with a CPAP machine; the other cannot stand safely in a shower. They send the Guest Special Needs Form the same evening, listing the CPAP, a shower stool and a raised toilet seat, and the automated confirmation arrives inside 24 hours. They print the personal reply and pack it with the CPAP. On the first evening the distilled water and extension cord are on the desk and the stool is in the shower. Across the corridor, a couple with the same needs who sent nothing spend the first afternoon at the desk and the first night without water for the machine.

| WHAT TO DO

1. Find your line's form the day you book. Royal Caribbean and Celebrity want it no later than 30 days before sailing; Princess wants its Mobility Questionnaire at least 60 days before.
2. List every cabin item by name: shower stool, raised toilet seat, mini-refrigerator, sharps container, distilled water, extension cord.
3. Complete a separate form for each traveler who needs anything.
4. Watch for the confirmation. On Royal Caribbean, if nothing personal arrives within 48 hours, email or call the access team.
5. Print the reply and pack it in the carry-on with your medication.
6. If the deadline has passed, send the form anyway and telephone the access team to ask what can still be arranged.

| SAY THIS, WORD FOR WORD

I sent the special needs form on the day I booked. Please confirm in writing that the shower stool and the refrigerator are listed for my cabin number.

The deadline has passed and I know that. I would still like this request on file before I board, and I would like to know which items can still be arranged.

| IF THEY SAY NO

We have no record of your form. Read the date and time off your printed confirmation and ask them to file it again while you are on the telephone. Ask for a new confirmation by email before you hang up.

It is too late for that item. Ask which items are still possible, and whether the item can be requested on board from housekeeping. Then write down the name of the person you spoke to.

The steward will sort it out when you arrive. Say you would still like it on the form, because the cabins on the list are set up first. The steward is the person who will thank you for it.

| WHAT IT COSTS TO SKIP THIS CHAPTER

Nothing on your bill, and that is the trap. The cost is a first night without the thing you need: a CPAP with no water, a shower you cannot safely stand in, insulin in a minibar that was never meant for it. Those are the nights that end with a call to the medical center, and the form would have prevented every one of them.

| THE OFFICIAL SOURCE

Guest Special Needs | Royal Caribbean Cruises: <https://www.royalcaribbean.com/resources/guest-special-needs>

Celebrity Guest Special Needs Form:

<https://www.celebritycruises.com/content/dam/celebrity/pdf/Celebrity-Guest-Special-Needs-Form.pdf>

Pre-cruise FAQs - Princess Cruises: <https://www.princess.com/faq/pre-cruise>

Accessibility at Sea - Princess Cruises: <https://www.princess.com/accessibility-at-sea>

Applicable-forms | Carnival Cruise Line: <https://www.carnival.com/about-carnival/special-needs/pre-cruise-forms>

Facilities & Services for Guests with Disabilities | Carnival: <https://www.carnival.com/about-carnival/special-needs>

Facilities & Services for Guests with Disabilities | Carnival: <https://www.carnival.com/about-carnival/special-needs/faqs>

| BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS CHAPTER

- ☐ I have found my line's own form and its deadline
- ☐ Every cabin item is named on it, for every traveler
- ☐ I have a confirmation, not just a sent email
- ☐ The printed reply is packed in my carry-on
- ☐ If I was late, I have sent it anyway and called