



Office for the Arts at Harvard

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TICKET MANAGER HANDBOOK

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What is a Ticket Manager?

You are the representative of the producing organization responsible for the distribution, sale and tracking of tickets for an event. You are also responsible for the handling and accounting of ticket income. You report to the Producer and work closely with the Publicity Manager and House Manager. Your duties begin as soon as an event is scheduled to take place, progress to the day of the event, and continue after the event.

A Ticket Manager's job will vary depending on the location of and seating arrangement for the event, and the chosen method(s) for distributing and selling tickets.

Some venues may have an on-site Box Office that assumes some or all of the responsibilities outlined in this book. Review these matters with the representative of the venue to avoid duplicating or conflicting efforts.

A glossary of terms with which you may not be familiar is available.

First: Know the Event

Before an event goes on sale, the Ticket Manager gathers important information about the venue, the organization, and the event itself and provides this information to all points of sale, including individuals selling tickets on consignment. The Ticket Manager should be familiar with all aspects of the event that affect the patron. The Ticket Manager should visit the venue ahead of time, sit in different locations in the House, attend a rehearsal or performance and be ready to offer feedback on the event based on first hand experience.

Event Information	You will need to give the following information to Box Office Managers and ticket outlets so that they can answer patron inquiries.
Information obtained from the Producer	<p>A description of the event, including featured performers.</p> <p>Number and length of intermission(s).</p> <p>Will any of the performances be ASL (American Sign Language) interpreted?</p> <p>Instructions for writing checks. When running an independent ticket operation, checks should probably be written to the producing organization. If you are selling tickets through an established Box Office or ticket outlet, they will instruct the patron.</p> <p>Your organization's tax ID number.</p> <p>Any information regarding connected events such as a black tie opening, pre or post event receptions, or lectures.</p> <p>Websites with information about the event or producing organization.</p> <p>A statement from the Producer regarding the suitability of the event for children.</p> <p>Description of the event. At the point of sale, the ticket seller may be asked to volunteer information about the performance or the performing group to aid the patron in their decision-making process.</p>
Information obtained from the Representative of the Venue	<p>Directions to the venue both by car and public transportation.</p> <p>Parking options.</p> <p>Information for patrons in wheelchairs regarding parking; access to building, the House, the Box Office, and restrooms; and location of wheelchair seating in the House.</p> <p>Is there a TTY phone line at the Box Office? Does the venue have assisted listening devices?</p> <p>The seating capacity and seating chart of the House. If you are using an established Box Office, they may already have this information.</p> <p>Websites with information about the venue.</p>
Information obtained from the Stage Manager	An estimated running time for the event.

Second: Meet with the Production Staff to set Policies and Parameters

The following guidelines should be established in consultation with the Producer, ideally two months in advance of the event. The Manager of Student Ticketing Services, located at the Office for the Arts, 74 Mt. Auburn St., is available to advise you.

- Seating Configuration** General Admission (unreserved) tickets are easier to sell and inventory. They also make House Management simpler. Remember to inform patrons that seating is done on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Reserved Seating is used in special circumstances. It restricts seating options for patrons and House Management, requires more work for the box office and usher staff working the event, and often delays the start time of an event. Consult with the Manager of Student Ticketing Services before making a final decision about Reserved Seating.
- Ticket Prices/Discounts** Decide whether you will offer discounts for students, seniors or groups.
- Consider whether a student discount applies to those attending any institution of learning, or just Harvard students.
- Decide what number of individuals constitutes a "group."
- Discuss any other discounts or special offers and determine the price structure.
- It is the Producer's responsibility to consider both the positive and negative impact of any special offers on the overall event budget. Special deals should be geared toward people who would not otherwise attend the event and for performances that would otherwise be undersold.
- On Sale Date** Tickets for undergraduate events generally go on sale one month before the event. Do not publicize or advertise an event before tickets are on sale. If necessary, the On Sale Date should be included in press releases, brochures and "save the date" postcards.
- Tickets to be Held** Before tickets are put on sale to the public, the Ticket Manager and Producer should discuss how many and which tickets should be withheld from sale. This is a good time to determine the best and worst places to sit. If an event is Reserved Seating sit in several different seats to determine what the view of the stage is like from different sections of the House.
- Reasons for holding tickets include:
- House Seats/Trouble Seats**
These are seats that are kept off-line for last minute problems. The House Manager may need to use these seats if an error leads to a show being oversold or, in a Reserved Seating House, a seat being "double sold." They may also be needed if there is damage or a spill that makes another seat in the House unusable. House Seats are also kept available so that the Producer can accommodate last minute ticket requests from VIP's.
- Usher Seats**
Consult with the House Manager on how many and which seats need to be held for ushers.
- Obstructed Seats**
The placement of lighting and sound equipment or the need for cameras and other video

equipment in the House often necessitates removing seats from the capacity because the equipment is placed in the seating area. These decisions need to be made early so that the appropriate number of tickets can be pulled. In the case of a Reserved Seating House, the exact placement of such equipment must be established before a show can go on sale.

Obstructed View Seats

Some seats may offer particularly bad sight lines to the stage or have views that are obstructed by architectural elements or production equipment. The Producer and Ticket Manager should use their discretion in deciding whether to pull these seats or to sell them at a reduced price. The ticket seller and the text on the ticket must inform patrons that they are purchasing an obstructed view seat.

Seats Required for Performers

A performer may need a seat if s/he is being "planted" in the House.

Events with multiple performing groups may allow performers to sit in the audience for part of the performance. Consult with the Stage Manager on these matters and make sure the corresponding tickets are pulled at the Box Office.

VIP Seats

See [Complimentary Ticket Policy](#) page 5.

Latecomer Seats

See [Latecomer Policy](#) page 6.

Complimentary Ticket Policy

A Producer will often choose to make complimentary tickets available to performers, production crew and VIPs such as College staff and faculty, donors and other special guests. The Ticket Manager should have a list of such individuals.

The Producer and Ticket Manager should be very selective in offering complimentary tickets. If you offer someone a free ticket to one event, they are likely to expect free tickets to your next event.

Set a policy as to when unclaimed complimentary tickets will be released for sale. Inform all recipients that their tickets will be released at the door for sale if they're not picked up 30 minutes prior to the advertised start time.

VIPs should be given a special invitation by the Producer and asked to RSVP. The Ticket Manager can develop a list of VIPs for whom tickets should be held ahead of time and submit it to the Box Office.

Producers and Ticket Managers may offer performers and production crew a certain number of complimentary tickets. Since the core audience for most student shows is comprised of friends and family of the performers and production crew, be aware that a generous complimentary ticket policy will diminish your primary income source.

It is recommended that you create and use a complimentary ticket voucher that can not be easily duplicated for cast and crew. Complimentary ticket vouchers simplify the process of complimentary ticket distribution for the Ticket Manager especially for multi-performance events. See [Sample Complimentary Ticket Voucher](#) page 9.

Complimentary tickets for cast and crew are usually offered on an "as available" basis, unlike VIP seats that are actually pulled from the pool of tickets put on sale.

Latecomer Policy

Think about latecomers before you put tickets on sale. If you decide that it is unsafe or impractical to admit latecomers at all, you need to include a "no latecomer policy" in your advertising and press releases.

If you decide that latecomers can be admitted only to a particular area of the House, you'll need to pull those seats before an event goes on sale.

Waiting Line Policy

When an event sells, out patrons should be informed by ticket sellers that a waiting line will be established at the door. It is not recommended to start a waiting list either by phone or for friends who did not buy a ticket in time. A clearly established policy set ahead of time should clarify when and where the waiting line will begin and at what time tickets will be released. It should be well marked and be out of the way so that it does not interfere with other patron traffic. If tickets can be released, start releasing them at fifteen minutes before curtain.

People in the waiting line may be admitted only if:

- Complimentary tickets are unclaimed.
- Unpaid reservations are unclaimed.
- Standing room is available (as approved by the representative of the venue).
- The Producer and House Manager decide to release House seats.

Means of Selling Tickets

Some venues, like the Loeb Drama Center, Lowell Hall and Sanders Theatre, have their own Box Office from which you are required to sell tickets. If your event is being held in a venue with no resident Box Office, you may design, print and sell your own tickets or you may enlist the services of the Manager of Student Ticketing Services at The Harvard Box Office who will work with you in selling tickets via the following avenues:

Through The Harvard Box Office

On Consignment

Selling tickets on consignment allows members of the producing organization to sell tickets to friends and family. The Harvard Box Office Theatre will issue you tickets on consignment to distribute directly to members of the producing organization.

The Ticket Manager is responsible for keeping careful records of which tickets are given out to whom, tracking consignment sales and depositing the income in the bank. If an event is selling out on the evening of the performance, but not all unsold consigned tickets were returned to the Ticket Manager, the producing organization will lose the potential revenue for these unsold tickets.

Some groups choose to make the person with consigned tickets financially responsible for tickets not returned. The deadline for tickets returned should be no later than eight (8) hours prior to the event. This will assure all potential tickets will be available for sale.

The Manager of Student Ticketing Services will review with the Ticket Manager the time-line and procedure for selling consigned tickets and provide forms for keeping track of these tickets.

Consignment tickets are not equivalent to complimentary tickets. Consignments should be treated like cash. The Box Office considers any unreturned consigned tickets to be sold.

Through Mail Orders

Accepting mail orders is time consuming and complicated. It is not a recommended method of ticket sales for most student organizations. After consulting with the Manager of Student Ticketing Services, organizations that have planned their event at least three months in advance may choose to sell tickets through a brochure or mail order form. The Manager of Student Ticketing Services will assist you in creating mail order forms and processing systems. See [Sample Mail Order](#) page 15.

Two hints for managing an effective mail order ticket sale:

- Request that patrons include a self-addressed stamp envelope with the completed order form.
- Stay on top of orders. Process them every day.

By Unpaid Reservations

Eliminate, or keep to a minimum, the need for unpaid reservations. Never hold unpaid reservations more than one half-hour before the start of the event. Inform patrons they must pick up and pay for their tickets by then or they will be released.

At the Door

If your event is taking place in a venue without a resident box office, you will pick up tickets for sale at the venue from The Harvard Box Office several hours before each performance. For most student events, the Ticket Manager will set up and operate the "at-the-door" Box Office. See [Day of Procedures](#) page 11.

Third: Coordinate with the Publicity Manager

The Ticket Manager should meet with the Publicity Manager before tickets go on sale. Areas that require a coordinated effort between the Ticket Manager and Publicity Manager include:

- Using disclaimers such as “Program subject to change,” and “All sales are final” on tickets, brochures, calendars, websites, and ticket order forms.
- Making certain that all publicity materials contain the same information that the ticket sellers have. Check On Sale Date, event title, event dates and times, ticket prices, spelling and ticket text.
- Designing and implementing mail order forms.
- Keeping abreast of ticket sales to establish which performances warrant additional publicity and promotion and papering of the House. You will also want to alert the Producer and Publicity Manager to performances that are selling well and don't require papering. Restrict the number of complimentary tickets given away for performances selling well since that will diminish income potential.
- Considering opportunities for building audiences through community outreach. The Manager of Student Ticketing Services can suggest ways to do this through public service programs, schools and community groups.
- Making certain that information regarding where and how to purchase tickets is given prominence in all advertising, especially the phone number and hours of operation of the box office. All of your advertising dollars and effort are undermined if patrons don't have quick and easy access to tickets.
- Announcing through every possible avenue where and when tickets are on sale!
- Alerting the Publicity Manager to publicity opportunities coordinated by the Manager of Student Ticketing Services including:
 - Listing on the Harvard Box Office Web Site and voice mail Calendars.
 - Listing in the Harvard Gazette.
 - Poster display in Holyoke Center, Memorial Hall, and Lowell Hall.
 - Advice on other publicity opportunities on campus.

Ticket Manager Timeline

Put the Event on sale Six (6) to Eight (8) weeks in advance

E-mail or call the Manager of Student Ticketing Services to set up a meeting. The Manager of Student Ticketing Services is available to assist you, whether or not your event is in Sanders Theatre.

If you choose to sell tickets at The Harvard Box Office you must fill out a Box Office Requirements Form before tickets can go on sale. This process is made simpler by gathering all the information outlined in Know the Event.

Advise all ticket sellers of the best and worst places to sit.

If you choose to sell tickets on your own you must establish your box office location and hours, prepare all necessary forms, get supplies (such as envelopes, stamps and seating charts) set up a record keeping system and design, create and order tickets. Important information to include on your ticket includes:

The official titles of the event, the venue and the producing organization. Check spelling carefully. It is not sufficient to do a computer spell check. (For example, "Is it 'the Smithsonian' or 'The Smithsonian'?" "Is it 'theater' or 'theatre'?")

Ticket Prices - See [Ticket Prices/Discounts](#) page 4.

Latecomer Policy. The most lenient language should be "latecomer seating is at the discretion of the management." The strictest language is "there will be no latecomer seating for this event." See [Latecomer Policy](#) page 14.

Official event starting times. Be particularly careful to check the starting time for matinees, press openings and any evening event with a start time other than an 8:00 pm.

Disclaimers that remind patrons that there are "No Refunds or Exchanges" on tickets.

FOUR (4) to SIX (6) WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

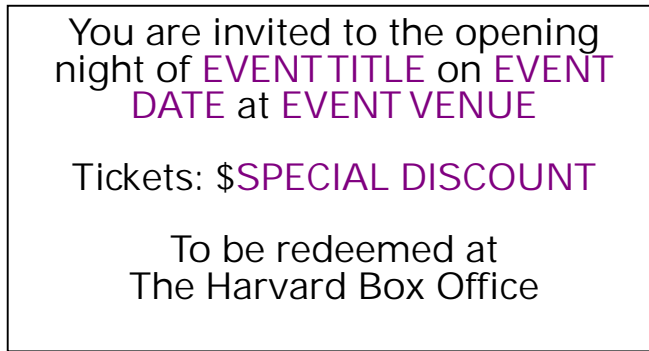
Create Complimentary Ticket Vouchers and Discount Coupons, if necessary. ([See Samples below.](#)) Drop off an example wherever tickets are being sold, so that they are prepared to receive and honor them. Distribute to voucher recipients.

Sample Comp Voucher:

**This voucher entitles the bearer to
NUMBER complimentary tickets to
NAME OF THE EVENT
DATES and TIMES
at EVENT VENUE**

To be redeemed at
The Harvard Box Office

Sample Coupon:



Arrange for a Harvard University Police Department (HUPD) security detail to be present beginning one hour prior to the start and continuing through the end of the event. Whenever any type of cash transaction takes place, a police detail is required. Contact Officer Tom Mercier at (617) 495-0832. Note: Consult with the Producer and House Manager to confirm who will be arranging Police and/or Security details. For Sanders Theatre events, the Memorial Hall Production staff arranges the HUPD detail.

Enlist assistance. One or two people will be needed to work during pre-show at the on-site Box Office for each performance. Having additional people working in the Box Office during pre-show allows the Ticket Manager to move around and communicate, coordinate and troubleshoot.

Consult with the Producer to develop a list of VIPs. Offer complimentary tickets to those VIPs.

**Two (2) to Three (3)
Weeks before the
Event**

If you have chosen to have members of your organizations sell tickets, this is a good time to issue tickets on consignment. If you are utilizing the services of The Harvard Box Office, requests must be made in writing 24 hours in advance. Use the convenient Consignment Request Form on line.

Drop off 5 posters to The Harvard Box Office for display at Holyoke Center, Memorial Hall and Lowell Hall.

Gather materials for your on-site Box Office. Coordinate your efforts with the representative of the venue and the House Manager to avoid duplications. Materials may include:

Signs:

PURCHASE TICKETS HERE

PICK-UP RESERVED TICKETS HERE

THIS PERFORMANCE SOLD OUT - WAITING LINE BEGINS HERE

FINAL SALE - NO RETURNS, REFUNDS OR EXCHANGES

DOUBLE CHECK YOUR TICKETS AND YOUR CHANGE BEFORE LEAVING THE BOX OFFICE

TICKET PRICES ARE: _____

PATRONS NEEDING ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES SEE _____

Office Supplies:

- Storage for unsold tickets and paid tickets being held for pick up (ex: shoebox type container)
- String for hanging signs (masking tape is not permitted in most venues)
- Cash box (available from The Harvard Box Office)
- Adding machine/calculator
- Paper, pens, pencils, paper clips
- Ticket envelopes (some are available from The Harvard Box Office)
- Price multiplication charts
- Seating chart (if event is Reserved Seating)
- Box Office Statement forms

Week of the Event

The Ticket Manager checks on ticket sales periodically to gauge how well the event is selling. The Ticket Manager must try to anticipate what the volume of "at the door" sales will be. If you are anticipating a large volume of sales at the door line up more help for the performances. This last minute activity at the Box Office directly affects the event starting time.

Work with the House Manager to remind the cast and crew to tell their friends and family to buy tickets in advance; to arrive at the theater no later than 20 minutes before the advertised start time; and that latecomer seating is not guaranteed.

Three Days Before the Event

Collect RSVPs from VIPs who plan to pick up their tickets at the on-site Box Office and begin drawing up a complimentary ticket list.

Contact your Box Office assistants to confirm they will be at the Box Office when you need them. Make sure that receipt of your calls and e-mails is confirmed, so you are not left without adequate help during pre-show.

The Day Before the Event

Submit a complimentary ticket list in writing to The Manager of Student Ticketing Services.

Collect unsold consignment tickets. Record and track consignment ticket sales to date.

Day of the Event

"Day Of" Procedures Vary for Sanders Theatre Events and Events at Other Theatres. See [Day of Procedures for Sanders Theatre events](#) page 14.

The Morning of the Event

Get change from the bank (\$100 starter: fifty ones, six fives and two tens) before the bank closes.

The Day of the Event (6:15pm - 6:30pm)*:

If utilizing The Harvard Box Office, pick up unsold tickets, complimentary tickets, advance sales, reports and cash box.

If an emergency arises and the Ticket Manager is unable to get to The Harvard Box Office by 6:30pm, someone else should be sent instead. Call The Box Office to inform them who is coming. Make special arrangements with the Manager on duty if the person is expected later than 6:30pm.

*For matinees make special arrangements with the Manager of Student Ticketing Services for ticket pick up.

**1 ½ Hours Before the
Advertised Start Time**

Arrive at the event venue. Make sure you have tickets, reports, \$100 starting cash, cash box, and necessary office supplies. Set up a ticket sales table. Display appropriate signs.

Meet the person (or people) working in the Box Office during pre-show.

Review customer service and security issues.

Open the Box Office/ticket table. The House Manager may be able to assist in getting this operation up and running in a timely manner. If the Box Office is not in operation one hour and fifteen minutes prior to the advertised start time, consider the event behind schedule. You and the House Manager should do everything possible to get things back on track.

Consult with the House Manager about holding seats for VIPs and other complimentary ticket holders. In a general admission house this requires putting "Reserved" signs on the seats.

Gather and alphabetize all tickets being held for patrons who will pick up tickets at the door.

Check with performers who have informed friends and family that they are holding tickets for them at the door. Those tickets need to be dropped off at the on-site Box Office one hour before the event. Make sure the reservations carry the following information:

- Customer's name
- Event date
- Event time
- Number of tickets purchased
- Price per ticket
- Name of Venue
- Performer's Name

Sample ticket reservation:

Event Date/Time	Venue
Customer Name	
# tickets @ X Price = \$total	

Never oversell a performance, even if there are empty seats when the event starts. A latecomer who has purchased a ticket has a right to a seat. Do not sell tickets to or admit patrons beyond the capacity of the House. It is unsafe and against fire codes. When an event sells out, establish a single file waiting line. See [Waiting Line Policy](#) page 6.

Watch for people who may be waiting in the wrong line (for example, the waiting line rather than the line for paid reservations) and redirect them to the correct line.

After the event is sold out and as many people as possible from the waiting line have been admitted, be professional in turning people away. Encourage people to purchase tickets for one of the remaining performances, if any. If a patron refuses to leave the theater, or

becomes verbally or physically abusive, you should enlist the assistance of the police or security on-site and/or call the Police.

**Fifteen Minutes Before
Curtain**

Release unsold tickets (such as unpaid reservations and unclaimed complimentary tickets) to the waiting line. See [Waiting Line Policy](#) page 6.

If it appears the event will not sell out, consult with the House Manager about dressing the House in order to avoid large areas of empty seats. Dressing the House refers to the task of making the audience look better, for the performers as well as for the audience, by moving audience members into empty gaps in the house. For example, if there are seats available in the mezzanine (lower level of the House) move audience members down from the balcony.

**After the Event Has
Started**

If patrons continue to buy tickets after the event has started, inform them of the late seating policy. Do not sell tickets if you are not certain the patron can be seated.

Record all tickets sold at the door. Confirm that the cash taken at the door matches the number of tickets sold at the door. Fill out the Box Office Statement.

At the end of an event, mark and store the remaining unsold tickets as "deadwood" to avoid selling them to another customer for another performance.

Reconcile all ticket sales (at the door sales plus advance sales) and compare the number of tickets sold against the House Manager's House count. If the House Manager's count exceeds the final Box Office count or the capacity of the House, it means that more tickets may have been sold than have been accounted for. Recheck the consigned ticket figures, and make sure tickets were not double issued or reproduced without your knowledge.

Report any problems or discrepancies in the Box Office Reconciliation to the Producer or Producer's financial representative.

Prepare the deposit. The Box Office income should be deposited in a bank at the end of each day shortly after the event begins. Never walk alone with money from ticket sales. Call for an escort from the Harvard Police Station or ask the HUPD officer on duty to call the station for an escort.

"Day Of" Procedures for Sanders Theatre Events

Morning of the Event	BY 12 NOON return unsold consignments to The Harvard Box Office sorted counted.
1 ½ - 2 Hours Before the Event	<p>Drop off any tickets being held for patrons who will pick up tickets at the door.</p> <p>Consult with the House Manager about reserving seats in the house for VIPs.</p> <p>Check in with The Box Office. Let the Manager on duty know where to find you in case questions or problems arise.</p>
After the Event	One week after the event, collect and sign for your check at The Harvard Box Office if their services were utilized

Sample Mail Order Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Day: _____ Evening: _____

E-mail: _____

Please mail tickets to (if different from above address):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ticket Order:

Performance Title	Date & Time	Price	# of Tix	Subtotal

Total for tickets:	
Donations:	
Processing Fee:	
Total Enclosed:	

Method of payment:

MasterCard Visa American Express Check (Make check payable to _____)

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

Return Completed Order Form to: NAME AND ADDRESS

DEADLINE INFORMATION / DISCLAIMERS

All sales are final. No returns, refunds or exchanges.

Thank you for your order. Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope.

For Office Use Only:

Patron #:	Date received:	Date processed:	Seats:	Initials:	Source:

Sample Box Office Statement

Event title:

Day:	Date:	Time:
Location:	Weather:	
Capacity:		

	Price	Sold	Total
The Harvard Box Office			
Consignment			
Complimentary			
At the door			
<i>Totals</i>			
		<i>Less Credit Card Fees</i>	
		<i>Less Restoration Fee</i>	
		TOTAL GROSS	

Capacity	-Sold	= Dead