

The Big List of Things Not to Say

Compiled by Service Untitled – www.serviceuntitled.com

Customer service is tricky. Customer service representatives have to be very careful about what they say and how they say it. Otherwise, a few misunderstood words can cause a customer to misinterpret the situation and turn what could have been a positive experience into a very negative one.

The list below has been compiled with the help and advice of quite a few bloggers (particularly Tom at [QAQNA](#)) and will hopefully help your customer service representatives *say the right things*.

What not to say: I'm new at this

What to say: Nothing. Apologize for the wait, if applicable.

Why: The customer may pretend to be nice and give you empathy, but they really just want to be transferred to someone who knows what they are doing.

What not to say: Oops or I've never had that happen before

What to say: Don't say anything.

Why: No customer wants to hear that you have made a mistake or something went wrong.

What not to say: [silence]

What to say: Explain what is going on.

Why: You have about seven seconds of silence or "dead air" before a customer wonders what is going on. Try to avoid silence and dead air in general.

What not to say: You have to or give me

What to say: If you could please; would you mind; could you; I'm going to need you to do this please; may I please have your

Why: Customers don't want to be told what to do – they would like to remain in control.

What not to say: You're wrong

What to say: I don't think that is correct; you may be misunderstanding this; hmm, I don't that is one hundred percent correct

Why: You can't tell a customer they are downright wrong. It can make a bad situation worse.

What not to say: I don't know or no one's ever asked me that

What to say: That is a great question, let me check; I don't know that off hand, but I can find out the answer for you right now

Why: The customer assumes you know (at least most of) the answers. Saying you don't know causes them to lose confidence.

What not to say: I can't or it's company policy or no

What to say: Unfortunately, I cannot do that, but what I can do is this; No, but I can do; Let me connect you to a representative who can be of more assistance with that

Why: Customers don't care what you can't do, they want to know what you can do.

What not to say: It's not my job.

What to say: Unfortunately, I cannot help you with that. I'll be happy to get you to the department (or person) that handles that.

Why: It may not be your job, but the customer just wants to get the answer.

What not to say: They

What to say: We or our

Why: Who is they? Aren't you they? Try to say we or our and give the customer confidence that he or she is talking to the right person.

What not to say: There is nobody higher than me

What to say: Unfortunately, I am the highest ranking supervisor/manager on duty right now. I can take a message and have my boss call you back tomorrow if you would like.

Why: When customers ask for a call to be escalated, this is a phrase that will certainly contribute further to their anger. Unless you are the CEO, don't say that.

What not to say: The CEO (or –executive-) doesn't have a phone number or we don't give out –executive's- phone number or address

What to say: I cannot give out our CEO's phone number. However, would you like to be transferred to our manager on duty? I am sure he can help you.

Why: When customers ask to talk to an executive, they are mad. Work with them, not against them.

What not to say: Calm down

What to say: -name-, could you please let me explain; could you stop yelling; there is no need to get upset

Why: This is a hard situation to handle under any circumstances. Try and explain what happens and hope the customer will calm down. You should also apologize and work on getting the issue resolved.

What not to say: Sorry

What to say: I apologize

Why: Sorry seems impersonal. Try and sound more sincere.

What not to say: But

What to say: And or however

Why: Saying but is just preparing customers for a let down. Use and or however, instead.

Author Information: This article was compiled from a series of examples and posts sent to [Service Untitled](#), a blog about customer service and the customer service experience. Individual authors have been credited below. For more information, advice, resources, and daily posts on customer service or for more information on our consulting services, please visit www.serviceuntitled.com.

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