

20 Diplomatic Phrases to Help You Regain Control in 9 Common Situations with Difficult Customers

By Myra Golden



What to say to the **yelling or cursing** customer.

- § “I’m trying to help you, but if you continue to yell and swear, I am going to ask that you call back another time. It’s up to you...which would you prefer?”
- § “I’m sorry. It isn’t possible to help while listening to that language. If it stops, I can help.”
- § “If a few minutes helps you calm down before we continue, that would be fine. You can certainly call me back.”
- § “I want to help you, yet the language is getting in the way.”

Note: *Your tone is critically important with the above statements. You must come across calm, neutral, and non-threatening.*

What to say to the customer who wants to speak to a **supervisor**

- § “I’m sorry you feel you need to speak with someone else, but that’s the reason I’m here. I have been given full authority to help resolve your concerns. May I have the opportunity to resolve this first?”
- § “Please give me an opportunity to try and resolve this for you. That’s why I’m here.”

What to say when you cannot honor the request for refund due to consumer error.

- § “It is our company policy that we cannot pay a claim that involves consumer error. We have a responsibility to the company to uphold the integrity of our products. When a product performs as expected and has no deficiencies, we cannot take responsibility and accordingly can offer no financial assistance.”
- § “Although you might not agree with my decision, I’d like to explain it so you can at least understand.”
- § “We appreciate hearing about your experience, but we cannot compensate you in this matter because you failed to follow instructions/did not read instructions/misused the product.”

What to say to the rambler or storytelling customer

- § “Before we hang up I want to be sure to tell you...” This statement psychologically leads the customer toward the end of the conversation.
- § “I don’t want to take up anymore of your time so let me give you...” You can make this statement even when the customer has called you.
- § “One last thing I need to tell you....”
- § “I have all the information I need so I’ll now....”
- § “Please help me understand where this conversation is taking us.”

What to say when you need to convey empathy

- § “The problem you experienced is no more acceptable to us than it was to you.”
- § “It must have been very frustrating for you to get the Widget home and discover it doesn’t work properly.”
- § “It must seem like these things take forever.”

What to say to the customer who wants you to bend the rules

- ü Remember: Today’s exception becomes tomorrow’s **expectation**
- ü Empathize with the customer and at the same time remain neutral

Say something similar to:

- § “In order to be fair to everyone I must...”
- § “I wish that were possible, but your request is beyond my level of authority. I will, however, check with my manager.

What to say when you need a **graceful exit**

- § “We see this differently and I am going to have to put more thought into the perspective you have shared with me. It’s helpful for me to understand how you see things. In the meantime, here is what I can do to solve the immediate problem.”
- § “I’m sorry that I have not been able to help you. If you don’t object, I would like to let a colleague/manager of mine attempt to better meet your needs.”

What to say to the **demanding customer who wants on-the-spot answers**

- ü Reiterate what you know, what you can do, and what they can expect.
- ü Explain, *“I don’t want to further disappoint you. I want to be honest about what we can do for you.”*
- ü Be honest with the customer.
- ü Do not let the customer make you give an immediate response.
- ü Do not make any promises you can’t keep.

Sample responses:

- § “Your request goes beyond my authority. I will however, contact the right people and have someone who can help call you back.”
- § “I know you would like an immediate response, and I wish that were possible. This request requires input from other people. I assure you I will locate the appropriate person who will get back in touch with you.”

What to say when you want to **“safely” apologize**

- § “Please accept my sincere apology for any frustration this may have caused you.”
- § “I am sorry for any misunderstanding you may have experienced.”

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