



Customer Service Notes for Words and Phrases to Use (and Not Use)



We know the important role communication plays in providing customer service. The language we use is a key part of the communication process. The words and phrases we say to participants can determine how they respond to our requests and how they view our customer service.

Noted below on the left-side are commonly used phrases that are negative; on the right side are better options for saying the same thing.

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| 1. "You have to..." | "We suggest that..." |
| 2. "I'll try..." | "I will..." |
| 3. "Why didn't you..." | "It would be helpful if ..." |
| 4. "We can't do that..." | "Here's what we can do..." |
| 5. "You should have..." | "It would be helpful if you..." |

Consider how you feel as a customer when the service provider says the above negative phrases. Those the left can make participants defensive or resentful. Especially avoid using "you" declaratives. Words "problem" and "unfortunately" should also not be used as these will not help in building rapport.

The above phrases on the right side are more "customer-friendly" and help build rapport. They can also assist with a new participant who is upset about her personal situation.

Remember to use basic courtesies such as "please" and "thank you." Also, if a participant thanks you for something, do not respond with "yep" or "no problem." Appropriate responses are "you're welcome," or "my pleasure." Also, avoid verbal filler such as "um," "uh," and "you know."

While it is important to use positive language in person, it is even more important to use it on the phone, since the participant cannot see your expressions or body language.

Positive language demonstrates empathy and shows you are truly interested in helping the participant. Participants then are more likely to comply with your requests – whether they involve paperwork or nutritional recommendations.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Are you aware of the phrases you use with participants?
2. What words or phrases can you use for participants to become more receptive to your suggestions?

