

# What Do You Say?

## When You Can't Say YES

There are times when you just can't say yes to a guest. It's not fun, but it's life. The thing that will determine whether this interaction ends up a positive or negative experience for your guest is all in how you say no. As an example, picture yourself as the customer explaining a problem to a service person. When you suggest a solution, he answers with one of the following phrases:

***"I can't do that."***

***"You're wrong."***

***"We don't do that."***

***"That's against our policy."***

***"Ma'am, that's just not possible."***

You get the idea. In fact, most of us have been there and we know exactly the feelings these responses evoke. (Of course, it wouldn't be polite to put them in writing, so we'll just move on.) Keep these in mind as the top five things you should never say to a guest.

So what can you say? There are ways of saying no without alienating your guests or putting them on the defensive. If you are pleasant and professional, calm and non-defensive, chances are good that your guest will follow your lead. Second, when you tell a guest that you can't give her the exact solution she wants, you can ease the sting by offering some other options. This way, you are focusing on what you can do for her.

Here are some examples of what to say ...

***When you can't make the return without a sales slip.***

*“Normally we aren't able to accept returns without sales slips, but there are a couple things we could do. You could contact the manufacturer directly, and I can get that number for you. Or if you think you can find the receipt at home, you can bring it back with you another time.”*

If your manager has been given authority to override certain policies, enlist her help for your customer.

*“If you would like, we can contact my sales manager and see what she might suggest.”*

***When you can't give cash back.***

*“With a charged item, we are happy to credit your account for the amount of the return. Or if you prefer, we can give you in-store credit, which can be used today or anytime within \_\_\_\_\_ months.”*

***When you can't give cash back until a check clears.***

*“We are happy to do a cash return with your receipt 10 days after the date of purchase, which allows for the check to clear. If you would rather receive a check in the mail, I can take your name and address right now and you should receive that within \_\_\_\_\_ days. Or if you would prefer in-store credit, it can be used today or anytime within \_\_\_\_\_ months.”*

***“I'd like to make a reservation at noon for 11 people.”***

The first thing you want your guest to hear is that you want to serve them. Even though you can't say yes, **don't say no**. Instead of

starting off your sentence with a “no” statement like “I’m sorry, we don’t have room for a party of 11 at 12:00—can you make it 11:30?” simply say,

*“We can seat a party of 11 at 11:30. Would that work for you? Wonderful. May I take your name? Very good, Mr. Schaffer. We look forward to seeing you this morning at 11:30.”*

***“I’m his parent. I have a right to know.”***

*“Your son is fortunate to have a parent as involved and concerned as you are. However, records for children over the age of \_\_\_\_\_ are confidential and can’t be given out to anyone else. We would be happy to confirm any information with him and then he is free to share that with you.”*

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