

## Words and Phrases to avoid with your customers

- **“As I’ve just explained Mr.....”** Your customer won’t thank you for using this phrase. After all isn’t it possible that the customer hasn’t understood your explanation, or couldn’t hear everything you said due to background noise? Using this type of phrase sounds patronising.
- **“Obviously, Mrs ..... You should have.....”**. What is obvious to a knowledgeable advisor such as yourself, is clearly not obvious to your customer. Focus on offering solutions and avoid belittling your customer.
- **“I do understand how you feel, but.....”**. It is easy to tell someone you know how they feel, but do you really? Also by following the statement with BUT, reverses what you have just said, as what usually comes after a but is a contradictory statement. Example empathy statements: “I would feel the same in your situation Mr..... and I will do all I can to sort this out,” OR “I can hear the frustration this has caused for you Mrs....., let me look into your details so that I can get to the bottom of this and find a solution”.
- **“If you would just listen to me”**. This often happens when customers are irate and very unhappy about a situation and so they don’t want to let you speak, until they have vented. The best thing you can do is let the customer vent. Show them you are listening and wait until there is an appropriate time to speak. Make sure you empathise before you go into solution mode. If the customer does not feel that you have listened and understood, they are unlikely to let you speak!
- **“I’m afraid that I can’t do that”**. Don’t focus on what you can’t do, focus on solutions. If there is something you can offer, even if it’s not exactly what the customer has asked for, then start your response with what you can do and why.
- **“If you carry on with that attitude, I will end the call”**. Customers do sometimes get very angry and use inappropriate language. However, in most cases, once advised it is not appropriate, most customers will stop. You are more likely to receive a positive response from a customer if you avoid threatening them. An alternative phrase is “Mrs....., I really want to help to find the best solution for you, and it is difficult to do this when you shout, or when you use strong language.” If the customer continues then reiterate that you do want to help them, however it is very difficult to do so when they continue to shout etc. In most cases, it would be appropriate to speak to your line manager for advice rather than terminating. Your line manager is likely to take over the situation if it is difficult for you to continue.
- **“Can you please calm down”**. Similar, to the point above, avoid using this type of phrase. Allow your customers to voice their frustration and anger, if they need to, it usually doesn’t last long. The last thing they want to hear are the words “calm down”. It usually has the opposite effect.
- **“If you’ll just let me finish!”**. If the customer wants to speak, let them speak. Using this type of phrase or trying to talk over them to get your point across will make the situation worse. Also consider, that perhaps the customer wants to interrupt because of something you have said e.g.

Did you start your response with “Unfortunately Mr..... we can’t.....”? Remember focus on what you can do, so that customers want to listen to you.

- **“You’ve come through to the wrong department”**. This type of statement puts the blame solely on the customer and is never received positively. As an alternative, you could say “I can certainly put you through to X dept who will be able to help you with that. Please can I take your name so that I can tell the dept who is calling?” Or “X dept will be able to help you with this query, and I can certainly give you their number. Have you got a pen and paper handy to write this down?”
- **“Our policy terms and conditions clearly state....”**. Avoid this completely. Customers do not generally care and probably haven’t read the terms. Remove it from your response and just explain the situation to the customer clearly, avoiding jargon. Explain What and Why, to help the customer understand where you are coming from.
- **“It’s company policy”** As above, customers do not care about Company Policy! Remove it from your vocabulary.
- **“I’m quite new to this role, would you mind bearing with me a second?”** You want your customers to have confidence in you and if you tell them you’re new, this is less likely. No-one knows all the answers, therefore if you don’t know, just politely and positively tell the customer that you would like to check with (your manager or another dept), to ensure that you provide the best solution for them. Always check that the customer is ok to hold, before placing them on hold.
- **“We apologise for any inconvenience”**. If you are sorry – say you are sorry! Also, “any inconvenience” sounds very vague and won’t make your apology sound sincere. It states an element of doubt about how much inconvenience was caused. It’s much better to say “I’m really sorry Mrs...., as I can clearly hear how this situation has caused inconvenience for you and I am going to do my utmost to resolve this.

Make it your mission, this coming week, to remove any of the common phrases listed. Also focus on using these positive words and phrases as much as you can.:

### Positive Words to use

- Definitely
- Absolutely
- Certainly
- I can/I will
- That’s fantastic – thank you

Your customers will thank you for focusing on solutions and what you can do!