

**Customer Service in the Children's and Programming Department  
of the World's Nicest Public Library ☺**

Customer service should be simple, but can be tricky since every situation, person and question is different. In general please remember that we are government employees and our primary job is to help our patrons. Always be friendly, polite and available when you are on the desk. Try to assume the best of the person standing in front of you and be "solution-oriented." Sometimes we will still have to say no, but let's make that the exception.

**Standards:**

- Please try to greet everyone that walks in by saying hello and smiling.
- When a customer approaches the desk please ask how you can help them, or what they need. If you are helping someone else, please look them in the eye and say you will be with them as soon as possible.
- Immediately end conversations with co-workers when a customer approaches or when a telephone rings. Limit personal conversations at the desk to 1 minute or less.
- When business allows, walk patrons to the shelf to help them find the materials. Always walk kids to the adult section.
- Try not to correct patrons. Instead, you can say the correct thing as an example but try not to be too heavy-handed.
- Feel free to print or copy things for kids if you can't find a circulating source for them to take home.
- Always err on the side of giving the customer what they want. If you can do it and it's not violating a policy please do it and get clarification later.
- In person patrons should be your priority. Feel free to take a phone number from a patron on the phone and call them back, or let the phone call go to voicemail.
- Take opportunities to educate people. For example, when they ask where Youth Services look up the item they are looking for and turn the monitor and show them where the actual call number is.
- Always ask follow-up questions: Can I help you find anything else? Is that what you're looking for? Etc.
- If someone complains, please listen first. If you cannot resolve the problem direct them to Kristin.

**Examples:**

- A child approaches you and asks for a Transformers book. You looked them up yesterday and there weren't any. How do you proceed today?
- A teacher returns from the preschool room frustrated because he wasn't able to find ANY of the books he was looking for. What do you do?
- A mother calls and says she is looking for books on the death of a dog. She has a list and asks you to look them up for her. What is your course of action?
- A child tells you she's read everything by Tamora Peirce and doesn't like Paolini's books. What do you do?

## De-escalation:

**80% -- 90% of our communication is non-verbal. It is very important to be able to identify exactly what we are communicating to others non-verbally. Be aware of your countenance when speaking to unhappy patrons. Do you appear annoyed? Are you pointing or clenching your jaw? Try to act calmly and professionally. If you are right, then you should feel confident in your explanation to the patron.**

### If they continue to be unhappy:

- Listen and try to *appear* empathetic. Most people just want to be heard.
- Try to summarize their complaint and respectfully repeat it back to them. Sometimes when people hear things simplified they realize that it is less important than they thought.
- Lower your voice, nod and say things like "I'm so sorry that happened" or "I'm sorry you feel that way." You want to validate without agreeing.
- Offer a solution or alternative if possible.
- Briefly explain the policy in question and outline the patron's choices in the situation.
- Do not disagree with the patron or engage them in an argument. If they are looking for a conflict, continue to offer them the choices available.
- If a patron becomes loud or disruptive, inform them that you have offered choices and will need to end the conversation now. Then call Security and document the situation- via email or incident report.

### Things to keep in mind:

- The 5 item look-up limit is a myth. This is not sanctioned by policy anywhere in the WNPL Policy Manual. Please look up as many titles as you have time for. If you are busy you may say "I'm sorry, I only have time to look-up a few more titles for you."
- Cell phone use is allowed in the building, so use judgement when asking people to talk softly. The policy manual says the following:

Using mobile phones or pagers within the Library in such a way as to disturb others. Patrons should turn off mobile phones and pagers or set them to silent alarm when in the Library. The Library Board urges patrons to use mobile phones in the foyer or outside the Library.

- It is fine to vent about a customer or a situation in the workroom out of earshot of the public. Get it out, laugh, commiserate, but then please move on. There will always be difficult customers, the only thing we can control is our reaction.

For those who read this: the first 5 people who say the word "Pamplemousse" to me will get a dollar as a reward for reading this!!!