

## 21 TIPS FOR EXCELLENT RETAIL CUSTOMER SERVICE

---

Today I witnessed a customer service miracle in action. I took my son to our local Chick-Fil-A so he could have some lunch and play in the indoor playground. While I was waiting for our food to be ready, a woman approached the counter with a crushed Styrofoam cup. She said, “This cup fell off of our table and broke. I need another drink and I need someone to come clean up our table and the floor.” The tone of her voice suggested that somehow the restaurant was responsible for her broken cup. And of course, there was no, “Hey I’m so sorry, one of my horrible children was fooling around and caused you a mess.”

It was then that right before my eyes a customer service miracle occurred. Rather than replying with the same nasty treatment they had just gotten from the customer, the staff at Chick-Fil-A quickly gave her a new drink. Then a man appeared with a smile and said, “I would be glad to clean that up for you.” The staff never heard the words “thank you” from that customer, yet they acted as if they had. All were professional and conveyed an attitude that said, “We love having the opportunity to serve each and every person in this restaurant.”

Way to go people at Chick-Fil-A! Not surprisingly, the place is almost always busy. The restaurant is clean, the management supports our community with various school-spirit fundraising nights, the food is better than most fast food places and most of all, the people that work there make you want to come back.

Watching customer service interaction is my hobby and my work. You see, I’m an instructor with Business Training Works, Inc., a soft-skills training company that teaches people the skills they need to be successful at work. Today’s experience was a living, breathing example of the 21 Rules for Excellent Retail Customer Service that we share with the participants in our courses. Most of them are not that hard to follow. However, they can be hard to follow consistently.

If you don’t work with customers in retail, be sure to communicate your appreciation to the people that serve you well. Believe it or not, a simple but sincere “thank you” goes a long way. If you do work with customers in retail, take a look at the list and ask yourself how closely you follow the rules.

### 21 Tips for Excellent Retail Customer Service

---

1. Smile when greeting a customer in person and on the phone (and yes, they can tell if you are smiling over the telephone!).
2. Use age-appropriate greetings, and avoid referring to older customers and women as “guys.”
3. Be proactive and ask how you may be of service.
4. Stay visible and available, but don’t hover.
5. Don’t turn away, walk away, start to make a phone call, or duck beneath the counter as a customer approaches. (We’ve all had it happen to us.)
6. The live customer standing in front of you takes precedence over someone who calls on the phone.

7. Never judge a book by its cover—all customers deserve attention regardless of their age or appearance.
8. Leave food and beverages in the break room.
9. A customer doesn't want to hear about your upcoming break.
10. Makes any personal calls when you're on a break and out of earshot.
11. The correct answer is never "I don't know" unless you add to it, "but I can find out for you."
12. If a customer wants something that isn't on display, go to the stock room and try to find it.
13. If the item isn't in the stock room, offer to call another store or order it.
14. Learn to read body language to see if a customer could use some help.
15. Don't let chatty customers monopolize your time if others are waiting.
16. Call for backup support if lines are forming.
17. Be discrete if a customer's credit card is declined by asking if there is another method of payment he or she would like to use.
18. Never discuss customers in front of other customers (they'll wonder what you're saying about them once they leave).
19. Inspect merchandise before bagging it to make sure it's not defective or the wrong size.
20. Make sure customers receive everything they've paid for before they leave your store.
21. Smile as you are saying goodbye and encourage the customer to come again.

And here's one more tip: if you can, **give people more than what they expect.**

*Article courtesy of Business Training Works. For training, coaching, and keynotes, visit [www.businesstrainingworks.com](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com)*