





- Describe the pictures. The people working in each one interact with customers in different ways. Talk about each one.
- What are the differences between the pictures?
- What is similar and different in how each person needs to deal with customers? What is important?
- What are your own experiences dealing with people in such situations, whether as a worker or a customer?

TOPIC CARD

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

DISCUSSION

What does good service mean to you? Think about different contexts, from shops and restaurants to public services like libraries, schools and government offices.

What experiences do you have of different service cultures (in different places, different countries, different businesses and so on)? Talk about your best and worst experiences.

What do you think of the idea that "the customer is always right"?

How do you feel about "service with a smile"? Think of it from the point of view of a customer, an employee and an employer.

How do you feel about technology-based customer service options such as call centres, automated phone lines, online chat (with bots), mobile apps and self-checkout in shops? What is your personal experience with them?

JUST IMAGINE

With a partner, take turns role-playing being a shop assistant and a customer returning an item of electronics that doesn't work. Before you begin each role play, each of you should decide (without telling your partner) if you will be smiley and friendly or firm and businesslike. You should always be polite. Try a few times, then discuss how you felt in different situations. How did it feel when you were being firm compared to smiley and friendly? How did the different responses from the other person make you feel?

QUOTES

> *"People will forget what you said. They will forget what you did. But they will never forget how you made them feel."*
>
> **Maya Angelou,** writer

> *"Most people would prefer to be in charge of our own smiles."*
>
> **Alicia A. Grandey,** psychologist

> *"Courteous treatment will make a customer a walking advertisement."*
>
> **James Cash Penney,** businessman

WORD BANK

customer service / customer satisfaction / customer rights / complaints, to complain / public service / private service / online service / postal service / public transport / banks / shops / restaurants / accommodation / police / firefighters / education / government offices / assistance / help / advice, to advise, to give advice / returns / (un)helpfulness / obstruction, to obstruct, to be obstructive / polite, politeness, to be polite / courtesy, to be courteous / rudeness, to be rude / surliness, to be surly (= unfriendly and unsmiling) / hostility, to be hostile, to show hostility / patronising / to talk down to someone / prejudice / (of a process, experience, etc.) frustrating / to speak to a manager / customer helpline / to leave a (positive/negative) review / word of mouth / reputation / to go out of one's way to help someone / to go beyond the call of duty / pushy / fake smile

WATCH OUT!

False friends and common mistakes

- To **please someone** means to give them pleasure; to ask for something using "please" is to **ask politely** or (very strong) **to beg**.
- To **return** an item means to take it back to the seller. **Returns** are handled by the **returns department**. Customers may ask for a **refund**, a **product exchange** or **store credit** (also known in *BrE* as a **credit note**).
- In a shop or store, you pay a **cashier** at the **checkout** or (*BrE*) **till**. Many shops also have **self-checkout** (also known as a **self-service checkout** or **self-service till**).
- The **civil service** means everyone employed by the state in non-elected positions (such as in government offices); people working in such jobs are **civil servants**.