

---

# In Other Words Activity – Leader Guide

---

## QUICK LOOK

### Purpose

Use positive and customer-friendly words with customers

### Audience

- Customer service reps
- 10-25 participants

### Timing

55 minutes

### Delivery format

Instructor led

### Notes

Easily adaptable for:

- Sales audience
- Leaders
- Virtually-led training

### Purpose

This activity encourages participants to think about the words they use when talking with customers. Participants come up with phrases that are not customer-friendly then create new, customer-friendly phrases to use instead.

### Audience

Best suited for participants who are either very new to customer service or have some knowledge and skill in customer service.

### Supplies

- Easel and chart paper (1 for the facilitator, 1 per group of 3-4 participants)
- Chart markers (3-4 markers per group)
- Participants' activity page

### Trainer prep

Talk with quality assurance team or customer service managers and find out:

- What words and phrases do they often hear their reps use that are not customer-focused?
- What are they hearing through customer surveys that could be addressed with reps using better word choices?

### Next steps

Once participants have their lists of customer friendly phrases, a great next step would be to practice using the phrases in role-play situations. Role-play partners could use give a thumbs up signal when they hear friendly phrases and thumbs down signal when they hear unfriendly phrases. These role plays could be done in the classroom or during team meetings.

## Discussion: 10 minutes

<b>Ask</b>	When you are a customer, are there words or phrases that customer service reps say that irritate you?  Anticipated response: yes
<b>Say</b>	Today we will take a look at some of those phrases and we will find new, friendly, more customer-focused words and phrases to use.
<b>Ask</b>	When we are customers, what are some of those phrases that we don't like to hear?
	For example, I don't like the phrase, "You have to..."



### *Trainer Tip*

*By providing an example, you shape and influence the responses the participants provide.*

<b>Ask</b>	What are the phrases that you don't like to hear?												
<b>Write</b>	At the top of a dry erase board or chart paper, write the title: <i>Unfriendly phrases</i> .  Underneath the title, record the words and phrases the group lists.												
<b>Inspire</b>	Encourage the participants to list at least 8-12 responses.  Possible answers:  <table><tr><td><i>You have to...</i></td><td><i>It's not our fault...</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>That's not our policy...</i></td><td><i>I want you to...</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>I need you to...</i></td><td><i>You must...</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>You can't...</i></td><td><i>You have to...</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>We don't do that...</i></td><td><i>That's not our problem...</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>That's not my job....</i></td><td><i>We can't...</i></td></tr></table>	<i>You have to...</i>	<i>It's not our fault...</i>	<i>That's not our policy...</i>	<i>I want you to...</i>	<i>I need you to...</i>	<i>You must...</i>	<i>You can't...</i>	<i>You have to...</i>	<i>We don't do that...</i>	<i>That's not our problem...</i>	<i>That's not my job....</i>	<i>We can't...</i>
<i>You have to...</i>	<i>It's not our fault...</i>												
<i>That's not our policy...</i>	<i>I want you to...</i>												
<i>I need you to...</i>	<i>You must...</i>												
<i>You can't...</i>	<i>You have to...</i>												
<i>We don't do that...</i>	<i>That's not our problem...</i>												
<i>That's not my job....</i>	<i>We can't...</i>												

	Include the words and phrases you heard from the customer service quality team and managers when you did trainer prep.
<b>Do</b>	Direct participants to write the phrases in their activity page.
<b>Ask</b>	When you are the customer and you hear these phrases, how do they make you feel?  Possible answers: <i>not valued, forced into a corner, disrespected as a customer, feels like the company is more important than the customer</i>
	When customers hear negative, demanding phrases like these, what actions could customers take?  Possible answers: <i>take their business elsewhere, escalate issue, share bad experience on social media.</i>
	When you speak with customers do you ever find yourself using some of these phrases?  Anticipated answer: <i>yes</i>
<b>Do</b>	Direct participants to their activity page. Ask them to put a mark next to words or phrases they use.  Allow 30 seconds for participants to mark the phrases they use.
<b>Ask</b>	Are there any phrases that you use that aren't listed?  Please write those on your activity page.
<b>Activity: 25 minutes</b>	
<b>Set up</b>	Form small groups of 3-4 participants.  Provide each group with an easel stand, chart paper, and chart markers.  Evenly divide the number of Unfriendly Phrases listed on the dry erase board or chart paper between the small groups.

<b>Say</b>	<p>In this activity, we will think of some other words to use that are positive and customer-friendly.</p> <p>Let's do one phrase together.</p> <p>Instead of saying "You have to..." what could we say?</p> <p>Anticipated answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Would you be willing to...</i></li> <li>• <i>Will you please...</i></li> <li>• <i>Please do this...</i></li> </ul>
<b>Ask</b>	<p>How do these new phrases sound to you?</p> <p>How do you think customers will respond to one of these phrases?</p> <p>Anticipated answer: <i>they will like them better, they will feel more valued</i></p>
<b>Say</b>	<p>In your groups, come up with phrases that are positive and customer-friendly.</p> <p>Write the phrases your group comes up with on your chart paper.</p> <p>You will have 10 minutes to write new phrases.</p> <p>Then, at the end of time, I'll ask you to share the new words with the class.</p>
<b>Ask</b>	<p>What questions do you have about this activity.?</p>
<b>Time</b>	<p>Allow the groups 5-10 minutes to come up with their new, customer friendlier phrases.</p>

### *Trainer Tip*

*Encourage the participants to come up with their own words and phrases. By them coming up with their own wording in this activity, they can later apply this skill as they become aware of other negative words and phrases that they use.*

<b>Say</b>	<p>Thank you for coming up with new words.</p> <p>Let's share your new words with the class.</p>
<b>Do</b>	<p>Call on each group to share their new phrases.</p> <p>Direct participants to record the new phrases on their activity page.</p>
<b>Debrief: 10 minutes</b>	
<b>Ask</b>	<p>Thank you for sharing the new phrases.</p> <p>What is the value of using these new phrases?</p> <p><i>Anticipated answer: customers will respond better and feel more valued, fewer customer escalations, happier customers, more positive comments from customers on customer surveys and social media</i></p> <p>What do you personally have to gain by using more positive and customer-friendly words and phrases?</p> <p><i>Anticipated answer: better customer survey results, better quality scores, less stress, resolve the customer's issue more quickly and get off the phone faster/be available for the next customer</i></p>
	<p>Earlier, I asked you to put a star next to words and phrases that you use, do you now have new phrases to use?</p> <p>Who would be willing to share something that you were saying and what you will now use instead?</p>
<b>Do</b>	<p>Allow for a few people to share their answers.</p>
<b>Say</b>	<p>Some of these negative words and phrases are habits. Breaking and changing habits is not always easy.</p>
<b>Ask</b>	<p>How will you remember the new phrases?</p> <p><i>Possible answers: write phrases on note cards and post near computer and phone</i></p>
	<p>How will you remember to use the new phrases?</p>

	Possible answers: <i>Get an accountability partner (like a co-worker), share new phrases with manager</i>
<b>Ask</b>	<p>We've talked about using these positive and friendly phrases with customers, are there any other situations when you could use positive words and phrases?</p> <p>Possible answers: <i>with co-workers, managers, friends, family</i></p>
	<p>Do you think we came up with a comprehensive list of negative words and phrases?</p> <p>Anticipated answer: <i>no</i></p>
<b>Say</b>	<p>No, there are many others that we didn't mention.</p> <p>I encourage you to be aware of your words, whether you are on the phone or face-to-face with customers, or with co-workers.</p> <p>Listen to your words. Think about the message. Think about how your listener perceives your message. If you need to change some words, change them.</p> <p>Just like we did in our small groups today, you can rephrase and use other words that are more positive and friendlier.</p>
<b>Wrap up: 10 minutes</b>	
<b>Do</b>	On your activity page, you'll see the "I commit" section. Please take two minutes to respond to the questions. At the end of 2 minutes, I will give you the opportunity to share what you've written.
<b>Activity set up</b>	<p>Put participants in pairs.</p> <p>Ask each pair to share their commitments with each other.</p> <p>Then put two pairs together.</p> <p>Ask the group of four to share their commitments with each other.</p>
<b>Do</b>	Call on three people to share a great idea they just heard.
<b>Say</b>	You've provided some great ideas for new words and phrases today.

I feel confident that you will use customer-friendly words with all of your customer interactions.

I encourage you to start using those words and phrasing today!

Thank you for your time.