
Dealing With The Public



Customer Service (Excellence)

Objective:

To provide a brief overview/review of some important customer service areas.

Basic Rules of Customer Service



WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS AND WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?

INTERNAL CUSTOMERS: **DESCRIPTIONS:**

EXTERNAL CUSTOMERS: **DESCRIPTIONS:**

WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN I WAS THE CUSTOMER?

DIRECTIONS:

List some memorable experiences you have had as a customer. Give a brief description of the behavior you saw from the person delivering the service. List both positive and negative experiences.

Positive Experience Behaviors	Negative Experience Behaviors

Have you ever been a bad customer?

RESULTS OF DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICE:

Positive results:

Negative results:

Department of Transportation's Customer Service Excellence Program Main Principles: Quality, Responsiveness, and Respect.

I. Quality Service Principle and Components

- A. Know yourself (self-pride).**
- B. Show pride in yourself, your department, unit, section and division.**
- C. Demonstrate knowledge of your job and your role in the organization.**
- D. Be skilled at problem-solving.**
- E. Carry yourself with professional demeanor.**
- F. Have concern for results.**
- G. Constantly strive for improvement.**

II. Responsive Service Principle and Components

- A. Take responsibility in carrying out your job.**
- B. Give immediate attention even if the entire request cannot be fulfilled at once.**
- C. Take action to resolve a request.**
- D. Demonstrate creativity (extending beyond customary rules and practices).**
- E. Provide clear and accurate communications.**
- F. Bring proper closure to the service interaction.**
- G. Be a good team member. Teamwork is the key to responsive service.**

III. Respectful Service Principle and Components

- A. Listen.**
- B. Act naturally, not phony.**
- C. Empathize (the Golden Rule of Service).**
- D. Tell the truth (demonstrate integrity).**
- E. Use good interpersonal relationship skills.**
- F. Monitor your voice tone and non-verbal communications.**
- G. Avoid bringing personal concerns to the job situation.**

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

MANNER OF JOB PERFORMANCE ISSUES:

- **Be calm**
- **Show concern by looking at the customer, use appropriate voice tone and non-verbal communications**
- **Keep your professional perspective in mind**
- **Respond, don't react**
- **If you mess up, admit it, apologize and try to correct it**
- **Don't be defensive**
- **Calm the customer by questioning or verifying**
- **Don't argue**
- **If you find yourself getting angry, get out of the situation for the moment or get help**

COMMUNICATION SKILLS ISSUES:

- **Listen fully to the words; not how they're said**
- **Don't interrupt; let the customer finish**
- **Take notes if appropriate**
- **Check for understanding between you and the customer**
- **Emphasize areas of agreement however small**
- **Discuss facts only; not opinions or rumors**
- **Acknowledge that a problem exists**
- **Mutually explore alternative solutions to the problem**
- **Confirm agreements/understandings**

SELF-PROTECTION ISSUES:

- **Don't take the disagreement or words personally. This requires learning to eliminate "hooks"**
- **Manage yourself effectively**
- **Demonstrate confidence in yourself and your job knowledge. "Fear" to difficult customers is like "blood in the water" to sharks.**
- **You can't please all of the people all of the time - but you can try.**
- **Give your best effort**



"The Foul Mouth"



"The Hysteric"



"The Big Shot"



"The Jerk"



"The Whiner"

INTERACTING WITH ANGRY/DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS KEY STEPS EXPLANATION

1. Maintain a friendly and professional manner.

The customer is not angry with you personally. In his/her mind you are the organization, and your organization has done him/her wrong. Do not argue with the customer. This may make the customer become defensive and even more difficult.

2.. Acknowledge a difficult situation exists.

Communicate to the customer that you understand the situation. Express empathy by responding to what the customer says and feels. Expressing empathy does not mean you agree with the customer. It means simply that you recognize and respond to what the customer is experiencing.

3. Calm the customer by questioning and verifying.

This shows you are interested in the customer's problem. It shows that you are working with the customer's problem. It shows that you are working with the customer. Verify your understanding of the problem.

4. Focus the customer on the problem.

Discuss possible solutions and their consequences. Ask the customer to help you solve the problem.

5. Handle the problem.

Concentrate on the most feasible and satisfying solution. Explain what you are going to do so the customer understands. Every customer wants service and special attention. Take extra steps to help the customer if possible.

Difficult Customer # 1

“The Big Shot”



“If you can’t help me, maybe you should be replaced with someone who can!”

“THE BIG SHOT”

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Must be seen immediately
- Demanding
- Rules don't apply to me
- Threatens employees
- Orders service, not requests it
- Issues ultimatums and deadlines

TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH THE BIG SHOT:

Appeal to the big shot's ego: *“We realize a busy person like you wants immediate service but...”*

Demonstrate action. Take observable steps to at least move the service process forward.

Don't talk policy. The big shot sees himself/herself as an exception anyway, so policy won't have any impact. You can say, *“In your case, I can ...”* Don't change the policy but represent it in a positive light. If it sounds like special treatment, whether it is or not, it may be seen as such.

Don't let the big shot's ego destroy yours. Focus on the business being transacted, not the personalities involved. Don't be intimidated. If you know and do your job, you're as safe as you can be.

Break up the big shot's game. Show concern. Don't be intimidated or defensive. Make neutral statements like *“I see”*; *“Yes, I understand.”*

Stick to your position. Accentuate the positive by repeating what you can do for the big shot. Be consistent. Big shots look for weaknesses such as inconsistencies. Stick to policy.

Don't argue. If you can't satisfy the big shot, call in your supervisor.

Difficult Customer # 2

“The Hysteric”



“WHAT CASH ONLY!”

“THE HYSTERIC”

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Histrionics, (*overly dramatic everything's a crisis*)
- Explodes over small issues
- Exaggerated emotional behavior
- Animated, (*jumps up and down; waves arms wildly*)
- Throws tantrums like a child
- Appears out of control

TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH THE HYSTERIC:

Let the hysteric vent. Show that you accept the negative feelings, but don't agree just to shut him/her up. Make neutral statements like *“I see.”*

***“Uh, huh.”; or “I understand.”* Don't waste your time at this stage by attempting to reason with the hysteric. Remain calm and in control.**

Take the act backstage. Remove the hysteric from the other customers' view. Move into a nearby office or some place less public.

Take responsibility for solving the problem. After the hysteric calms down, ask, *“What can I do that will make this situation work for you?”*

Difficult Customer # 3

“The Foul Mouth”



“# \$ % @ ! & !!!”

“THE FOUL MOUTH”

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Uses profanity freely
- Caustic, angry
- Crude, shows no regard for others’ feelings
- Cruel, sarcastic, attacks others
- Attempts to scare or intimidate employees

TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH THE FOUL MOUTH:

Ignore the profanity. Don’t let the words hook you. Sometimes you can defuse the foul mouth by saying, “*Excuse me, have I done something personally to offend you. If I have, I want to apologize.*” Often an approach like that will stop foul mouths dead in their tracks.

Force the issue. No one has to be subjected to profanity. Say, “*Excuse me, but I don’t have to listen to this.*” Walk away or (if you’re on the phone) hang up. Tell your supervisor what you have done and why. You’ve demonstrated that you’re in control and you stood up for yourself as a human being.

Use selective agreement. Pick up on something the foul mouth says and agree. For example; the foul mouth yells, “*I’ve been here for ten damn minutes and not a damned one of you sorry state employees has offered to help.*” Pick up on the “ten minutes” and respond, “*I can see why you’re upset. Ten minutes seems like a long time to wait.*” Unexpected agreement often defuses (or confuses) the foul mouth when you selectively agree with him/her.

Difficult Customer # 4

“The Whiner”



“When DOT widened the road next to my house, it completely destroyed my flower bed. Here is an itemized list of the cost of replacing the flowers.”

“THE WHINER”

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Complains about everything (*waiting in line, too hot, too cold, too tired*)
- Blames others for everything that goes wrong
- Makes excuses
- Treats small problems as big ones

TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH THE WHINER:

Listen but don't continue to listen for too long. Focus the whiner on the business at hand. Say, *“I'm sorry that happened but we need to solve this problem concerning...”*

Don't defend the system. The whiner is looking for a dialogue. Apologize for the wait (or whatever is legitimate), get down to business.

Reassure the whiner that you will do all you can to help but explain the limits of your role and responsibilities.

Don't get trapped by the “Poor Me” syndrome.

Difficult Customer # 5

“The Jerk”



“Sure, I’ll agree to that. Would I lie to you?”

“THE JERK”

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Deliberately misunderstands
- Pretends not to hear or is slow to respond
- Seizes opportunities to make things complicated or difficult
- Passive /Aggressive - Knows just how far to go
- Stubborn; refuses to cooperate

TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH THE JERK:

Show professional demeanor. Remain in control. Don't get hooked into getting angry. “Hooking” the employee is the main objective of the jerk.

Respond appropriately but don't react to the “word games.”

Don't lecture the jerk. Lack of regard for anyone else's feelings is a basic trait of this kind of customer.

Ignore as much of the jerk's behavior as possible. If you find yourself getting angry, get out of the situation for the moment or ask another employee to help the customer.

Know and stick to policies and procedures. Jerks will use their knowledge against you especially if you seem unsure about how to handle something.

Giving Bad News - Preparation Form

1. The situation with _____
(Name of Customer)

A. What must I communicate? (What is the situation as it affects this customer?)

B. Do I need to provide background information? _____ If "Yes,"
what should I say? _____

C. Do I want to provide reasons for this situation as I break the news?*

***Caution: Where a strong emotional reaction is expected from the customer providing reasons may only serve to fuel that reaction. The customer may be more able to hear and understand reasons at a later point in the discussion.**

If "Yes," what should I give as reasons? _____

2. Positive Points Regarding Situation And/Or This Customer

A. Once I have presented the situation, are there positive points that I can emphasize to this customer? _____ If “Yes,” what should I say?

B. What will NOT change? (What significant positive things remain the same?)

C. Can I express genuine confidence in this customer? _____ If “Yes,” what will I say to demonstrate my confidence? _____

3. Demonstrate Acceptance Of Customer’s Initial Reaction By

A. Predicting the customer’s reaction:

1. How might I feel in this case? _____

2. How might this customer’s reaction be different? _____

3. Is it reasonable to assume that this customer will have anticipated what I need to tell him/her? _____

4. Given 1 through 3 above, what label would best describe the reaction I will see and hear as I communicate the news? (e.g. angry, betrayed, confused, anticipating the news, etc.) _____

B. Responding to the reaction:

What statements might this person make, or what questions might he/she ask, that could prove difficult to answer? And how will I respond?

He/She Will Probably State Or Ask:	And My Response Will Be:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. Restating Positive Points

I will either refer back to my notes in Section 2 of this form or I will say:

5. Offering Assistance

A. Should I consider a second meeting to assess adjustment/plan for the future, etc.? _____ If “Yes,” when should it occur and what will be the purpose(s)?

B. Do I anticipate that, this customer will need help that is either outside my area of expertise or will take more time than I have available? _____ If “Yes,” who might best help this customer? _____

Should I prearrange a referral? Yes ___; No ___; Wait ___ (*until after the first meeting.*)

6. Expressing My Expectations

A. How do I expect this situation to be finally resolved?

1. Are my requirements negotiable? (i.e., Can I reduce any of my expectations in the short-term?) _____ If “Yes,” what is negotiable?

2. What action (including volume, deadlines, etc.) must be performed by this person in the next few days?

- B. Given what I know about this customer and his/her predicted reaction to this news, is it advisable to spell out standards of acceptable action during the adjustment period? _____ If "Yes," what will I say about these standards?

- C. How should I phrase my question(s) to check that my expectations are understood? _____
-
-
-

7. Follow-up Action

- A. Knowing myself and the customer; the best time for a meeting would be:

- B. To ensure privacy and a low-threat atmosphere; the best place to hold this discussion would be: _____

- C. The amount of time I need for this meeting is: _____

Tips You Can Use As You Prepare To Give Bad News

- 1. Describing the Situation** - You will want to avoid blaming someone else for the situation or beating around the bush. Get to the point as quickly as you can.
- 2. Positive Points Regarding the Situation and/or This Customer** - Whatever you say here must be based upon facts or genuine feelings. This is no time to pretend or raise false hopes. Remember, however, that no matter what you say during this step of the process, you're basically providing time for the customer to gather his/her thoughts. You should usually repeat whatever you say here after you've demonstrated your acceptance of the customer's reaction.
- 3. Demonstrating Acceptance of Customer's Reaction** - Most of us are not accustomed to identifying and accurately labeling a variety of emotional reactions in others. We've been taught that talking about emotions is not appropriate, particularly in the workplace. With this in mind, it may be helpful for you to refer to this list when you're predicting a customer's most likely emotional reaction to some particular form of bad news.

Words You Can Use to Name the Customer's Reaction:

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Angry | 12. Disillusioned | 23. Left-out |
| 2. Annoyed | 13. Disgruntled | 24. Numb |
| 3. Beaten | 14. Dissatisfied | 25. Off-balance |
| 4. Betrayed | 15. Embarrassed | 26. Panicky |
| 5. Bitter | 16. Frightened | 27. Raging |
| 6. Confused | 17. Furious | 28. Set-up |
| 7. Crushed | 18. Hostile | 29. Shocked |
| 8. Defeated | 19. Hating | 30. Terrified |
| 9. Devastated | 20. Humiliated | 31. Unappreciated |
| 10. Disappointed | 21. Irritated | 32. Withdrawn |
| 11. Discouraged | 22. Jilted | |

Once you have come up with a label for the general reaction, predict the customer's questions in advance to help remain in control of emotions on your end of the discussion. For example, assume that the situation you must discuss is the result of a decision with which you do not personally agree. It's important to decide how you will respond if you are asked direct questions about the role you played in that decision.

Also, you'll need a strategy to prevent yourself from taking the customer's reaction personally. Remember, the Emotional Reaction is both normal and necessary as the customer begins the road toward adjustment to the news. Yet, if the expression of that reaction takes the form known as "kill the messenger," it won't be easy for you to remain calm and collected.

4. **Restating Positive Points** - While this may be a direct restatement of points made in Step 2, if you have a greater share of the customer's attention at this time you may wish to elaborate with several specific examples of positive points.
5. **Offering Assistance** - Whether you plan to conduct a follow-up meeting with this customer on your own or plan to get someone else involved, it's important to tell the customer that he/she does have someone to whom he/she can turn for support and assistance.
6. **Expressing Your Expectations** - In some cases, you may want to note that you've searched for ways to ease expectations in the short-run, but that conditions do not allow you to do that. Such a statement may show the customer that you understand the difficulty when a person has just received bad news.

Whatever you tell the customer during this step, it's critical that the customer be requested to state his/her understanding of your expectations.

7. **Follow-Up Action** - You may not always have the luxury of having a follow-up meeting. If you do, schedule it at the convenience of the customer. By all means give the customer your card or phone number.

USING YOUR BEST VOICE

Try an inflection exercise by speaking into a tape recorder. Read the following sentence in your normal voice:

“John called in sick this morning.”

Now restate the same sentence with “surprise” in your voice.

Next, make it sound like a “secret”.

Finally, turn it into a “question”.

As your inflection changes, the sentence will convey a completely different meaning to the listener.

Controlling your voice is not necessarily a natural gift but it can be achieved through effort. Do an assessment of how you actually sound. Tape record yourself answering the phone and listen for problem areas - (e.g., high pitched whine, harshness, flat tone, weakness, slurred speech.) Then set to work to correct those problems.

There are four major qualities you should try to reflect in your voice:

- A. Distinctness - Speak clearly and distinctly. Speak with adequate volume but do not shout. Don't mumble; no one likes to strain to understand the person. An average rate of speech is 125 words per minute.
- B. Animation - Animation is that quality of your voice which gives it life and enthusiasm. It shows that you are alert and interested in what the other rate of person is saying. Vary the pitch of your voice. Speak at a moderate speed so that you do not slur or speak too slowly.
- C. Warmth - Cultivate a tone of voice that displays sincerity. Avoid using one understand. that is too technical or coldly mechanical for the customer to willingness to help. You want to convey a message of friendliness and
- D. Politeness - Good manners are not just for face-to-face communications. Thank callers for calling or for waiting. Use expressions like “you're welcome”, or “one moment, please”.

Our voices sound different. Some of us have the deep voice of authority, while others of us sound meek or frail. Voices can be pleasant or annoying; easy to decipher or unintelligible; clear as a bell or squeaky. The voice you project is determined by four controlling factors.

Enthusiasm - The energy in your voice reflects your attitude and enthusiasm.

Normal speech - A normal rate is 125 words a minute. Speaking too fast can create problems as well as speaking too slowly.

Tone - This can be a monotone, a low, or a high pitch. Ideally you should vary your tone and inflection.

Quality - The above three factors make up your voice quality. There are several things you can do to produce a more desirable speaking voice. Some include:

1. Practicing your tone and control by calling your answering machine or voice mail yourself and delivering several messages. Then listen to the playback and critique or ask a friend to help.
2. Role play with a co-worker, and tape record the conversation. Review it for tone, rate of delivery, etc.
3. Take a speech class in a local community college or check out a book from the library on voice exercises to help you avoid a monotone sound.
4. Simply remember to smile. It's true; your voice will sound friendlier.

VOICE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Your voice reflects your personality. To improve your voice, you must be willing to practice voice techniques as if you were practicing for tennis or golf. If you are consistent, you will improve.

Rate your voice using the following self-evaluation. Check the characteristics that apply to you.

MY VOICE

DESIRABLE TRAITS	UNDESIRABLE TRAITS
<input type="checkbox"/> is pleasant sounding	<input type="checkbox"/> is nasal
<input type="checkbox"/> has pitch variations	<input type="checkbox"/> sounds throaty
<input type="checkbox"/> has a normal rate	<input type="checkbox"/> is raspy
<input type="checkbox"/> varies in volume	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes squeaks
<input type="checkbox"/> has distinct articulation	<input type="checkbox"/> is a boring monotone
<input type="checkbox"/> sounds like I am smiling	<input type="checkbox"/> is too weak
<input type="checkbox"/> has ample force	<input type="checkbox"/> is too loud
<input type="checkbox"/> stresses proper accents	<input type="checkbox"/> has too many pauses
	<input type="checkbox"/> does not convey a “smile”

If, by chance, you have any undesirable traits checked, begin work on correcting them.

LISTENING TO THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN VOICE

The tone of voice you use with others may mean the difference between:

- (1) acceptable job success and GREAT job success, and
- (2) adequate customer service and QUALITY customer service.

Below are different voice styles by which people communicate. Which seems to best describe yours? Check the one(s) with which you identify most.

- My voice becomes agitated and/or loud when I am angry.
- I speak more quickly when nervous.
- My voice slows significantly and/or becomes quieter when I get tired.
- Others describe my tone of voice as “upbeat.”
- I can control my tone of voice in most situations.
- My voice can sound authoritarian and demanding when required.
- Others consider my voice meek.
- My voice is clear, direct, and natural.
- My vocabulary and style of speaking tends to be serious and scholarly.

Some of the above are better than others when interacting with others. Discuss with a friend or co-worker to help provide you with valuable insights as to the sound of your voice.

HINT: Call your answering machine, leave yourself a message, and evaluate how you think you sound.

AVOIDING CERTAIN STATEMENTS

Often, without realizing it, employees make statements that leave negative perceptions. Here are some of these common statements.

Check the statements you have heard or used yourself. Rewrite the statements to improve the public's perception

1. ____ I'm sorry. Mr. Austin is still at lunch.

2. ____ I don't know where he is, do you want to leave a message?

3. ____ I think she is still having coffee. Do you want her to call you?

4. ____ He has gone to see the doctor.

5. ____ He went home early.

6. ____ I'm sorry Mr. Eaves has not come in yet.

7. ____ Our support staff takes forever to answer the phone.

Read the following statements. Imagine you are a customer hearing the statement. Rewrite the statement so it will be better received by the public.

- all
1. "I'm sorry I didn't call you back. My boss had us in another meeting that lasted morning."
 2. "I don't understand why the district office didn't help you."
 3. "Purchasing has had a lot of problems lately. I'll call over there and get this straightened out for you."
 4. "Mr. Jackson is in a meeting ... why don't you call back in an hour?"
 5. "I'm sorry you had to wait. Our secretaries are very slow."

TELEPHONE QUIZ

Treating customers professionally means being as pleasant over the phone as you are in person. Take the quiz below and see if you can score 100%.

True or False

1. ____ It is okay to keep someone waiting on the phone while you attend to another equally important task.
2. ____ You should actually smile when you answer the telephone.
3. ____ If nobody is around to answer a ringing phone and it is not your assigned job, the best thing to do is let it ring.
4. ____ It is acceptable to not return a call. If the call was important, the calling party will try again.
5. ____ If a customer is rude, it is your right to be equally snippy.
6. ____ You should identify yourself by name when answering a business related telephone call.
7. ____ If business is slow, it is perfectly acceptable to make personal calls to your friends.
8. ____ It is important to communicate a sincere interest in the caller and the information that is being requested or provided.
9. ____ The conversation should be ended in an upbeat manner, with a summary of any action to be taken.
10. ____ When you are upset, it is possible to communicate a negative attitude over the phone without realizing it.

HANDLING THE TELEPHONE

We need to understand the features of our telephone system. These features are designed to help us handle calls smoothly. Reading about the features available on your telephone and practicing these features will help you better understand the capabilities available to you.

The time to learn about your telephone is before you need to know.

- ** Hold the mouth piece of the telephone directly in front of your mouth. This improves hearing.
- ** Place the telephone in an area so you can pick up the receiver without hitting anything. Unnecessary noise interferes with hearing.
- ** Place the caller on hold before discussing his or her situation with a co-worker. It could be embarrassing if you told a co-worker that a caller was rude, only to discover that he/she was listening.
- ** Never eat or drink while talking.
- ** In answering the telephone, a maximum of three rings is a good standard. Answer in as few rings as possible.
- ** When you place a caller on hold to answer another line, ask for permission and WAIT FOR AN ANSWER. You should say: "Would you mind holding while I answer my other line?" Then, wait for the caller to reply. Usually we hear: "Please hold" and the person is gone.
- ** If you have several callers on hold, remember the priority of each call by making notes of who is holding for whom.
- ** Do not mumble. Speak clearly and distinctly.

THE CALLER'S PERCEPTION OF THE PUBLIC

Following is a list of telephone statements that are to callers. Read each statement and rate the "PERCEPTION" you think a caller will have after hearing the statement. Rate each statement with a "G" if you think the caller's reaction will be good; and a "P" if you think it will be poor.

RATING

1. ____ Good morning, Training & Development, Gina Dean speaking.

2. ____ Sorry I don't know where he works ... you will have to call the Personnel Department.

3. ____ Mr. Smith is out. Any message?

4. ____ I don't work in that department so I can't help you.

5. ____ I really don't know why they didn't return your call. Did you try and call them back?

6. ____ May I review your request to insure we have all of the information?

7. ____ Mr. Smith I'm sorry you received the wrong form, but I wrote down the information just as you gave it to me,

YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS INVENTORY

The kind of service you provide is up to you. If your objective is to become a professional public service provider, two things must be done. First you need to assess your present skills level to determine where improvement is needed. Next you need to develop a personal action plan to improve your skills. These steps can be done using this page and the "Action Plan".

Following is a service skills inventory. Grade yourself on each skill area. Use a rating of "A" if you feel you are excellent at the particular skill, "B" for good, and "C" if you need improvement.

SERVICE:

- I accept responsibility for providing public service.
- I understand the importance of quality service.
- I know what our customers want and need.
- I empathize with customers by understanding their needs and doing my job

well.

- I realize that a positive perception of our service is essential.
- I am customer service oriented.
- I have a positive attitude.

TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES: I know how to:

- handle the telephone and use all of its features
- extend courtesy on every call or face-to-face meeting
- transmit a positive attitude
- ask questions. (I know how and when to use open and closed questions and can question to determine problems and requests)
- recognize and manage caller behavior
- avoid using statements that will create the wrong perception

