

Handling Difficult Customers

Angry Alan

- Go above and beyond to resolve the problem quickly
- Use proven de-escalation techniques
 - Stay in control of yourself
 - Listen
 - Do not raise your voice
 - Maintain a safe distance
- Take a breather
- Don't take it personally
- Use humor – in the workroom of course!



Persistent Pam

- Allow short anecdotes, but curb long stories
- Refocus to keep customers on track
- Refer to the next customer in line
- Have a co-worker "rescue" you
- Control your time by making librarian appointments
- Set time boundaries and stick to them



Rule-Bender Rita



- Move the conversation away from the desk/room
- Use relevant, concrete examples to illustrate the need for policies
- Tell her what you CAN do for her
- Remind her that respectful and appropriate behavior is required even though she disagrees
- Ask her if there is something else she needs help with before you move on
- Be sure coworkers are aware of Rita so she gets a consistent message from all staff members

No Boundaries Nora

- Establish boundaries
- Empathy
- Listening
- Assertiveness

“True strength is found in standing firm, yet bending gently”



Inappropriate Ian

- Take patterns of offhand remarks seriously
 - Inform Ian of inappropriate behavior
 - Report to manager/security
 - Create a paper trail
- Create a physical barrier
- Escalating behavior could result in a ban
- Police may need to be involved



Worse-Case Scenario Tips

- Train staff to recognize red flags
- Seek reinforcements
- Keep a list of banned or problem patrons so staff is aware
- Know your policy
- Escalate

Resources

Books

- *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson
- *Perfect Phrases for Dealing with Difficult People* by Susan Benjamin
- *Case Studies in Library Security* by Bruce Shuman

Videos

Don Crawley's Customer Service 101 videos, including How to Deal with an Angry Customer

<https://youtu.be/3Xi2MzPrTsE>

Run Hide Fight

<https://youtu.be/5VcSwejU2D0>