

## De-escalation Tips

Responding to customer complaints or requesting customer compliance is never fun, and in the worst-case scenario it can quickly escalate into workplace violence. We offer these insights and support:

### The Best De-escalation Technique Is What Feels Right to You

You could try all these methods on their own OR go for a mix-and-match approach of what's offered here. Whichever way you pick, probably the most important part you need to remember is that everyone has their own approach.

1. **Be empathic and nonjudgmental.** When someone says or does something you perceive as weird or irrational, try not to judge or discount their feelings. Whether or not you think those feelings are justified, they're real to the other person. Pay attention to them. Keep in mind that whatever the person is going through, it may be the most important thing in their life at the moment.
2. **Respect personal space.** If possible, stand 1.5 to three feet away from a person who's escalating. Allowing personal space tends to decrease a person's anxiety and can help you prevent acting-out behavior. If you must enter someone's personal space to provide care, explain your actions so the person feels less confused and frightened.
3. **Use nonthreatening nonverbals.** The more a person loses control, the less they hear your words—and the more they react to your nonverbal communication. Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.
4. **Avoid overreacting.** Remain calm, rational, and professional. While you can't control the person's behavior, how you respond to their behavior will have a direct effect on whether the situation escalates or defuses. Positive thoughts like "I can handle this" and "I know what to do" will help you maintain your own rationality and calm the person down.
5. **Focus on feelings.** Facts are important, but how a person feels is the heart of the matter. Yet some people have trouble identifying how they feel about what's happening to them. Watch and listen carefully for the person's real message. Supportive statements will let the person know that you understand what's happening—and you may get a positive response.
6. **Ignore challenging questions.** Answering challenging questions often results in a power struggle. When a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand. Ignore the challenge, but not the person. Bring their focus back to how you can work together to solve the problem.
7. **Set limits.** If a person's behavior is belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, give them clear, simple, and enforceable limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences. A person who's upset may not be able to focus on everything you say. Be clear, speak simply, and offer the positive choice first.

8. **Choose wisely what you insist upon.** It's important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not. If you can offer a person options and flexibility, you may be able to avoid unnecessary altercations.
9. **Allow silence for reflection.** We've all experienced awkward silences. While it may seem counterintuitive to let moments of silence occur, sometimes it's the best choice. It can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how he or she needs to proceed. Believe it or not, silence can be a powerful communication tool.
10. **Allow time for decisions.** When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think through what you've said. A person's stress rises when they feel rushed. Allowing time brings calm.

Source: [crisisprevention.com](http://crisisprevention.com)

#### Training Resources:

Canity training-library – 9-video lessons on dealing with rude customers

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoiraEd\\_KmQaiFkm8kY4rdRWFsc0kmGY](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoiraEd_KmQaiFkm8kY4rdRWFsc0kmGY)

Canity training library – 5 video lessons on dealing with difficult customers

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoiraEd\\_KmRdwJUXCdOA9kyzyY3G-N9p](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoiraEd_KmRdwJUXCdOA9kyzyY3G-N9p)

#### Additional resources:

- <https://www.servsafe.com/freecourses>
- <https://nobelbiz.com/de-escalation-techniques-for-customer-service/>
- <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Products/COVID-Conflict-Prevention-Training>
- <https://supportyourapp.com/blog/de-escalation/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/18-customer-service-de-escalation-strategies-jeffrey-benjamin/>
- <https://www.360training.com/blog/conflict-deescalation-techniques>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/de-escalation-techniques-customer-service>
- <https://simply-contact.com/de-escalation-techniques/>

**Conclusion** – It's been said that front-line customer service is *the “welcome mat of our hospitality industry”*

During these trying times of COVID, this essential customer service position has been under extra stress and strain. If there are any additional trainings or educational assistance that can be offered, please don't hesitate to contact us or your local Chamber with questions!

