

# RAIL

## An Approach for Managing Difficult Customer interactions\*

### Remind them of your roles.

R

Uncomfortable customer interactions often involve a customer failing to (or refusing to) acknowledge the division between the personal and the professional. When that happens, bringing the conversation back to books is often helpful.

- “Is there anything specific I can help you find?”
- “Remind me, what was the title you were looking for?”
- “We just got some new titles in about [subject]. Let me show you.”

### Ask for assistance.

A

You don't have to handle tough customer interactions alone. Bring in reinforcements from a coworker, a manager, or even a customer.

- “I need to get back to my other work duties, but [Coworker] here can help you.”
- “[Coworker] knows all about [subject]. I'll send you over to them so they can help you.”
- [To another customer] “Can I help you find anything while I'm here?”

### Insist on boundaries.

I

You don't owe customers personal information. If a customer asks you prying or inappropriate questions, stick to your guns by insisting on your boundaries.

- “I don't feel comfortable discussing this at work.”
- “That's private information, and I'd rather not share it.”
- “I have a policy of not talking about my personal life with customers.”

### Leave the situation.

L

If a threat escalates, extract yourself from the situation in whatever way possible.

- “I have other work I need to take care of right now.”
- “Excuse me, it's time for my shift at the counter/info desk/stockroom.”
- “I'll have to look this up on our main computer.”

**Remember:**

**To keep customer interactions on track, use the RAIL!**