

10.4 Customer care and personal presentation

Good customer service is about putting customers first and providing fast, friendly and accurate service that customers expect.

Customer care guidelines

The following headings are used in customer care guidelines:

Prepare

- Good personal appearance creates a positive first impression.
- Good product knowledge helps you answer questions and give advice.

Greet

- Make positive eye contact and smile to each customer.
- Be sincere in what you say.
- Treat people as if they were guests in your own home.

Listen

- Listen to the complete order/request. Be patient.
- Use positive body language when listening.

Check

- Clarify or check that you have heard the order/request correctly.
- If you cannot hear – tell them.

Present

- If it's not right, don't serve it.
- Present food in a way that shows care and attention.

Thank

- Acknowledge payment politely using 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Use your own words to thank customers and ask them to come again.
- Use the customer's surname and title if you know it.

These guidelines explain that personal presentation is key to good customer service.

Personal presentation

Appearance, hygiene, body language, attitude and behaviour as well as communication skills and presentation of work areas and equipment are all part of personal presentation and all important ways of presenting a positive image to customers.

Appearance and hygiene

First impressions are really important as there is only one chance to impress. Staff who are smart and presentable are already halfway to impressing customers. Good personal hygiene is part of this presentation. Hair and nails should be clean and tidy. There should not be too much make up or jewellery and staff should wash daily so they do not smell. Underwear should not be visible and clothes should be clean, ironed and not faulty – no dropped hems or missing buttons!

An establishment that is part of a large organisation will usually have a corporate image to help with appearance. They will have a uniform for staff so that everyone is correctly dressed.

Body language, attitude and behaviour

Body language is the gestures, poses, movements and facial expressions that a person uses to communicate. It is often called non-verbal communication and accounts for more than half of the way we communicate. Good body language helps to show a good attitude and appropriate behaviour.

Good body language helps towards showing respect for customers. See Chapter 6.4 for more on this.

Communication skills

Appropriate verbal communication is the other way we show respect to customers. The way we greet customers is one of the most important parts of this communication and helps towards those important first impressions.

Communication is about listening as well as speaking. It is important that you are clear about what has been said but also how it was said. Listening carefully is an important skill to learn.

Speaking correctly is also important. You need to use the right tone and pitch of voice. This also needs to vary to show that you are interested in the conversation. You need to speak clearly and not use slang or jargon, so that people understand you. For more on communication skills see Chapters 6.3 and 6.4.

Presentation of work areas and equipment

First impressions are also formed by the presentation of work areas. If you saw a smart receptionist sitting behind a desk piled high with pieces of paper, you would not get a good impression. Or if you saw a waiter's station piled high with dirty dishes, even though the waiter was smart, this would not create the right image.

TRY THIS

Design a corporate image for a new chain of vegetarian restaurants. Think about different members of staff, how will the corporate image differ in different jobs. Justify your choices.

CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1 Explain how to listen to customers and why this is important.
- 2 Why is good personal hygiene an important part of customer care?
- 3 What is non-verbal communication?