

Seven Vignettes about Working in Retail

By [Rachel Marcy](#) on September 23, 2014 in [PERSONAL STORIES](#)

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Rachel Marcy previously shared [Seven Hospital Vignettes](#).

A group of college students asked for the student price. I'd previously gotten in trouble for failing to thoroughly check student IDs, so I figured I should follow through. They didn't have them.

I was on my own and I ordinarily wouldn't care, but one of the guys annoyed me, so I told them they would have to pay full price.

"Look," he said pompously, "You can either make \$10 at the student price, or nothing. Which is it going to be?"

"I get paid by the hour," I said. "If you don't have your ID, you have to pay the full price."

He looked confused. They left. I might not be a paragon of customer service.

*

The man and the woman strode to the counter and demanded tickets for the exhibit.

I started to speak. "If you want the coatroom—"

"Thanks," the man snapped, as he stalked off into the exhibit room.

A minute later, they re-emerged, and asked the gift shop manager where they could hang their coats.

"She didn't tell us where," the man said, accusingly.

They divested themselves of their coats and walked back through the gift shop. The man narrowed his eyes and glared at me.

I leaned against the counter and smiled benignly. We maintained eye contact until he was forced to twist his head around rather than watch where he was going. Eventually the woman ushered him inside the door. He broke off first, so I'm pretty sure that means I won.

*

A man came storming in.

"Do you have outdoor hibiscus?" he demanded.

"I'm not sure, but I can call the gardener," I said.

"DO YOU HAVE OUTDOOR HIBISCUS?"

"No," I said.

He left.

*

The car was sitting in the parking lot. It was 10 minutes before closing, and I really didn't want to deal with people. At first I thought maybe they'd pulled over to read a map. Upon further examination, they were making out in the front seat.

They were teenagers, or maybe he was early 20s. I remembered seeing her around school, but I didn't know her name.

I told them we sold the last tickets half an hour before closing. They could go in if they really wanted to, but they'd only have 10 minutes and we didn't give a discount.

The guy started offering me increasing amounts of money, although I'm not sure to what end. I wasn't easily tempted to stay past closing time, that's for sure.

"You could just pay \$16," I said. "But we still close in 10 minutes. Or you could come back another time."

"Well, I just inherited \$30,000, so it doesn't matter to me," he blustered.

At that point, I guess his girlfriend coaxed him away.

They returned a few weeks later.

"So, you decided to come back," I observed.

"I've never been here," he said, combatively.

His girlfriend nudged him. "No..." she said, with a shy smile. "We have. Remember? That one time?"

"No," he said, bluntly. "I was probably high."

*

Two women and a 2-year-old walked into the toy store. The older woman was the boy's mother, and the younger was presumably the nanny.

"Can you help me?" the older woman asked. "I get totally overwhelmed by stores like this."

So I took her around the store, making suggestions for a birthday present for a 4-year-old girl. We must have found something satisfactory, because she turned her attention to her second problem: she was pregnant, and she wanted her son to give his

future sibling a present. Her son was interested in a stuffed monkey, so she thought maybe that could become the gift.

Feeling a sense of obligation and dread, I told her that the button eyes on the stuffed animal weren't considered baby-safe. "But we have a baby-safe monkey with thread eyes right here!" I said, encouraging her back into the infant section.

"Fillmore!" she said, grasping a monkey in each hand. "Which one do you want for Baby Brother or Baby Sister? This isn't for you. Do you want this one or this one? Baby Brother or Baby Sister? No, this isn't for you."

"Sister?" Fillmore said, tentatively.

One of the monkeys was bought, per Fillmore's confused pointing. Probably the one with the hazardous button eyes, but I can't remember. Fillmore got a knight figurine. I considered telling her that it was probably too delicate for a toddler, but then I gave up.

The next day I was working at the store's second location. My back was to the door when I heard her voice.

"Fillmore!"

I turned.

"Oh," she giggled, crinkling her nose in amusement. "You were at the other store yesterday. Ha ha."

"Ha ha," I said.

Fillmore was clutching the toy knight. Its sword had broken, or something, and she wanted to return it. Not that Fillmore cared; Fillmore was upset he was losing his knight.

"Do you have anything like it that's better for toddlers?" she asked.

I showed her a set of small wooden figures, complete with royal family and knights. Fillmore seemed interested, but his mother fretted.

"Daddy doesn't like you to have toys that look like dolls," she said.

They bought that or something else. Fillmore sank to the floor, sobbing.

"Yes, yes," his mother said, picking him up. "It's so hard being two and a half."

*Name changed. It was another Presidential surname, though.

*

The man was visiting friends, and he wanted a gift for their 2-year-old daughter. "Her dad's a doctor and her mom's a journalist, so she's probably really brilliant," he said. This was a common theme: people hastened to assure me that the child in question was not, by any metric, an average kid. "What do you have for a precocious 4-year-old?" they'd say. The doctor-lawyer combination was the trump card of power parents.

I showed the man the Lego Duplo. "Do girls play with Lego?" he asked.

I showed him some of my favorite picture books. "I just don't think they'd take the time to read to her," he said, dubious. That probably wasn't remotely true, but it still made me desperately sad. "Anyway, she's probably reading at a college level, or something."

He bought the books. I pictured him standing, shocked, as his brilliant friends praised their daughter for bladder control.

*

We had a regular customer, Lilly, who often came in with her nanny. She'd roll into the store in her stroller, and climb out with the demeanor of a miner descending for a day's work. She would then set about exploring the store with great seriousness of purpose.

When an older woman tried to say hello, Lilly graced her with an affronted scowl, then resumed pushing her miniature shopping cart around the store. The woman laughed and said it was good to be cautious around strangers.

Lilly presumably recognized me as a fellow curmudgeon, because she gradually decided I was an acceptable person. If there weren't other customers in the store, we'd play with the trains. She even started talking to me, although I think that was more a sign of her increasing age than my likeability.

We had a bucket of noisemakers by the counter. They were just plastic tubes that made a rather irritating sound when tilted, but they were beloved by children of a certain age. Lilly handed me one.

"Thank you," I said.

She handed me a second one.

"Thank you," I said.

She handed me a third.

"Th--"

She took it back, totally deadpan.

Lilly was a precocious child.

*

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Rachel Marcy likes history, sleuthing, ballet, fencing, and guinea pigs.



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thestonefruit · 174 weeks ago

+202

Lilly may or may not be commenting on this site, depending on how long ago that was.

[3 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Emily · 174 weeks ago

+66

I work in customer service and at least in my experience, talking to a Lilly makes all of these terrible people less memorable.



gullwing · 174 weeks ago

+25

TOO REAL.

I have to leave for my own retail job in an hour lolol sob.



aravisthequeen · 174 weeks ago

+175

I firmly believe that people who have never worked in retail have like, zero conception of what it is like. Which would explain SO many things: abject rudeness, the belief that you can bribe retail employees, the idea that "I'll never shop here again!" is some kind of threat, the thought that berating the cashier will somehow produce lower prices and/or better selection, etc. There are so many rude, terrible customers out there that it truly beggars belief and the only explanation is that some people really truly believe that retail is another world or retail employees are not real people.

[66 replies](#) · active 170 weeks ago



MRTK · 174 weeks ago

+168

"Daddy doesn't like you to have toys that look like dolls," she said.

brb weeping

[16 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Pear · 174 weeks ago

+73

Everyone except for Lilly I would like to set on fire. I've volunteered in public-facing roles and, my goodness, you get really funny heart-warming moments and FLAMES ON THE SIDE OF FACE moments.

I once babysat a 3 year old. We shared a taste for haw flakes. She gave me a tube of them.

'It's for you,' she said.

'Yes, thank you,' accepting the gift but not yet eating it.

'For you,' she insisted.

'I know!'

She put a book into my hands. 'Read this.'

As I was reading, she reached out and took the tube of haw flakes she'd given to me and started eating them herself.

[5 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



mmejoy · 174 weeks ago

+135

Being two and a half is only hard if your parents are assholes.

[10 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Nicole · 174 weeks ago

+122

I have to admit that sometimes I've been the person who has walked into a huge store, gotten overwhelmed, failed to find a salesperson, and wanted to stand in the middle of the store and shout "OUTDOOR HIBISCUS?" until someone just hands it to me.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



GreenGrasses · 174 weeks ago

+61

Uuugggh retail!! My two favorite customer comments:

upon walking into the tiny store and looking around: "So what kind of store is this?"

picking up an item: "Why does this cost so much?"

[15 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Bryn (Plus Others) · 174 weeks ago

+56

Poor Fillmore!

[1 reply](#) · active 174 weeks ago



CMS · 174 weeks ago

+14

Main takeaway, people are horrid.



suggestionnoted · 174 weeks ago

+58

Ah, terrible customers (or c*ntomers, as we used to call them in my former retail job). Middle-class white women in their 40s were always the rudest, in my experience, followed closely by rich white dudes in their 50s and 60s.

[4 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Sulagna Misra · 174 weeks ago

+27

This is great. I love Lilly. Also, I wish there was more than 7! Write more vignettes, Rachel! The picture for this is perfect too. I remember reading about the production of Shopgirl. That was also the first book I bought when I moved to LA for grad school...

These stories are always fascinating and strange to me because I'm always slightly terrified of people who work in service -- I'm worried I'll do something to hurt their feelings (though I am like this with most people).



Paper0Flowers · 174 weeks ago

+47

"Daddy doesn't like you to have toys that look like dolls," she said.

They bought that or something else. Fillmore sank to the floor, sobbing. "

Shitty parents like that just break my heart.



Kay · 174 weeks ago

+62

The Fillmore story makes me want to cry so much. Not the latter part, (though that's bad and I am indignant about gender issues, etc). The "pick a toy to give away to your sibling" part, where he clearly didn't understand and then was going to be horribly disappointed because of thinking the toy was for him. Seriously. Nearly tears.

The moral of this past week on The Toast for me is that I am not allowed to read articles that reference two-year olds in any way because I cry. (See "Love You Forever" made horrific.)

[3 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



relaineatwell · 174 weeks ago

+61

i don't care what you say. as far as i'm concerned, that child's true name is fillmore.



cosmia · 174 weeks ago

+142

This is even funnier if you imagine Fillmore's real name is Taft.

[8 replies](#) · active 169 weeks ago



emilybee · 174 weeks ago

+61

OH GOD this is so accurate that it is painful. I work at a museum, and one day I was answering the main phone line and a woman called and said, "There are geese in the park."

"...I'm not sure-" I started to say, because a) it's a park, in the fall there are always geese in the park and b) this is a museum, why am I the person you are calling? Why aren't you calling the park?

"Shouldn't someone call animal control about that?" She said.

Don't get me wrong, I am all about educating the public regarding the dangers of large waterfowl, because have you seen there

teeth? But no ma'am, I can not get rid of the geese in the park.

I also enjoy the endless calls we get from people who are lost trying to find the museum. "I don't know where I am, but I just passed Main street. How do I get to your museum?" I just want to say, you understand I don't have GPS tracker on your car? I can not tell where you are any better than you can. One might even say I will be less likely to know where you are, than you yourself! What main street did you pass? Are you even in the right state? How did you get this phone number if you can't find our building?! Calling from the road is literally the least effective way to get directions. "No sir, I can not stay on the line with you until you get here."

When people ask a long series of really, really dumb questions or do things like try to get us to book hotel rooms for them (WE ARE NOT A HOTEL) I am also a big fan of "Let me google that for you", because half of the time the person will figure out what I am hinting at. The other half of the time it is no use, and you spend ten minutes trying to explain that there are travel sites and travel agents and "no I can not call the hotel for you sir." LORD.

[10 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Dolores · 174 weeks ago

+52

so....many tales to tell here but among my least favourite are people who want to involve you in their Food Issues. I am not a good enough writer to summons all the ways in which this is framed to demand some sort of reinforcing/permissive response from the listener, but think infinitely subtle variations on 'Oh, chocolate, I shouldn't...should I?' and 'that cake's not too fattening, is it?'. It is overwhelmingly women who do this. NOW. I know this is a structural problem, and in the right circumstances I have got plenty of support to give to unpicking all that bullshit. BUT. As a waitress/shop assistant, I have nowhere to go with it, and it is so damn hard to find ways out of playing along. Suggestions welcome, because I am pretty sure resorting to 'oh, I don't worry about that sort of thing' is also pretty belittling :-/

[6 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



John · 174 weeks ago

+72

> "No," he said, bluntly. "I was probably high."

narrows eyes

[1 reply](#) · active 174 weeks ago



scullymurphy · 174 weeks ago

+50

Garfield. I'm convinced it's Garfield.

[17 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



nicole_44 · 174 weeks ago

+11

Poor lil Fillmore. :(

And gah, retail customers are the worst.



whittingly · 174 weeks ago

+92

I used to get in trouble at my retail job for answering customer questions with honest answers.

Example: "My grandson asked for this for his birthday, but I've never seen it. Is it appropriate for a nine-year-old?"

"It's rated R, and I've seen it and I wouldn't get that for my nine-year-old, no. Here are some more appropriate options for his age group."

"Thank you! I will get this instead."

[Mystifying glare of death from the manager.]

So I got demoted from sales to door person, which led to people asking me MORE questions right when they walked in the door, and my manager getting more angry at my answers. ("I don't know that band! But if you tell me the genre and how to spell their name, I'll point you in the right direction!") But when a cashier lied to a customer about the return policy and the customer then decided to destroy the store, breaking windows, throwing things, etc., before leaving he pointed dramatically at me and said, "SHE'S the only nice one here! All the rest of y'all are BITCHES."

Let that be a lesson unto you, former co-workers! You should have honored your return policy. #customerservice

[4 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



CleverManka · 174 weeks ago

+43

Working in retail should be a prerequisite to being allowed to shop. Anywhere. For anything. For bonus points, be a woman working in tech (or other manly-type of) retail.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



winterbymorning · 174 weeks ago

+143

A woman came into my small store and started speaking to me in Russian. I explained apologetically that I don't speak Russian. I tried English, French, and my high school Spanish, but all my attempts at communication were stymied because she insisted on answering me in Russian. I finally went to the stock room to ask my Russian coworker to help her. The two of them spent about 20 minutes discussing the merits of our merchandise (or... who knows what? not me, the only non-Russian-speaker in the room), but I noticed that every now and then she would turn to shoot a death glare in my direction.

When she left, I mentioned the glares to my coworker and asked him if the woman had been upset about something.

"She was mad because you wouldn't speak Russian to her," he said.

"But I got her a staff member who speaks it, and I told her from the start that I'm not Russian!" I spluttered indignantly.

"Yeah," he said, "but she said you *look* Russian, so you should know the language."

[6 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Atalanta_Is · 174 weeks ago

+83

I worked retail as a shy teen girl who was scared of everyone; I also have skin problems (eczema, allergies, rashes, dry skin, etc), and I'm very self-conscious about them.

The absolute worst customer I have ever had, a woman I will remember and loathe to my dying day, came in near the end of my shift and proceeded to a) exclaim over how disgusting my hands were, b) condescendingly explain to me that I could solve all my allergies by cutting high fructose corn syrup out of my diet (which, I didn't and still don't eat packaged foods hardly at all, and also I'm pretty sure corn syrup isn't going to do ANYTHING for ANAPHYLAXIS, because I have ACTUAL FOOD ALLERGIES), and c) WOULD NOT LEAVE

She spent 30 minutes next to the register, telling me over and over that curing my lifelong skin problems would be so easy! She should know, with her degree in naturopathy from Phoenix University!

Now, as an adult who no longer works retail, I can laugh about how pathetic it is to bully a teen girl over her medical conditions with a mail-order degree; at the time I barely made it to the end of my shift, then fled to cry in the back.

[8 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



cherrispryte · 174 weeks ago

+32

Oh god. I worked summers at a KB Toys and the specific nature of the experiences above are giving me flashbacks, though the store above sounds WAY nicer than KB Toys was.

Also, the toddler's name was either Harrison or Grant, I am betting. I really hope it was Eisenhower, though.

[7 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



grippyfish · 174 weeks ago

+44

I used to work in a gift shop that specialized in products made in-state (plus a few other items made elsewhere in the US, because they were too awesome/delicious not to carry). At least once a shift, someone would pick up one of the non-local products, look at me, and go 'AHA!' in the smuggest, most triumphant way possible. Like, yes, you found us out, good for you, please either pay or leave.

The worst, though, was when I offered chocolate samples to a woman who proceeded to look me up and down, sneer, and say, 'well, dear, I'm trying *not* to look like a whale.' But hey, more delicious stone-ground chocolate for me, I guess.

[1 reply](#) · active 174 weeks ago



abbeyroadmedley · 174 weeks ago

+109

"Look," he said pompously, "You can either make \$10 at the student price, or nothing. Which is it going to be?"

"I get paid by the hour," I said. "If you don't have your ID, you have to pay the full price."

You are my hero.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Sehn · 174 weeks ago

+10

Yes, perfect. My favorite retail experience is the one crusty assbag who has repeatedly closed the shop door on me after seeing me coming towards it carrying a case of champagne. That I've yet to stab him with one of the giant knives we use for cutting Pecorino is a miracle.



EllaAstor · 174 weeks ago

+15

Well, I worked as a waitress, and got a taste of just how odd weird and bitchy people can be.

What I worried about, like in going to a department store, is that I can take up the sales person's time. For instance, when I'm hunting for the perfect piece of jewelry and I don't know what I want, I will look at 20 or so pieces. One sales person said she was having fun, so I took her at her word, and I did buy a bunch of the pieces ... but in my quest for perfection I can be pretty needy. I worry about the "just buy something already, geez Louise" reaction. It's really cool, though, when I'm able to describe the kind of jewelry I want for an outfit, and the sales person picks the perfect piece & it's amazing. That said, I have 2 dressers full of jewelry It might be time to stop buying jewelry but so far no one has been able to present a decent argument for why I should cease & desist. Except, I have no place to put my clothes anymore. Well. I should think about that then.



Sarita · 174 weeks ago

+42

I worked in the kid's section of a Barnes and Noble and yeah, all the book and toy related stories are soooo familiar. Especially the "precocious 8-year-old" who "reads above their level" and then, when you show the parent/grandma/family friend an easy middle-grade book, they say, "Oh, no, that's much too long, an 8-year-old can't read this." I show them the chapter books. "Yes, like this, exactly. Why didn't you just bring me here in the first place?"

So... the kid's reading at or slightly below their level, then. I can only recommend as well as you describe your needs, Customer Who Expects Telepathy.

[1 reply](#) · active 174 weeks ago



HotDoom · 174 weeks ago

+44

Working in public libraries is not that different from retail (as in, the council often refers to borrowers as 'customers') and it's amazing the fight people will put up to save 20p on their overdue books. One time, a lady was trying to get out of paying charges on lost books by saying that since she could not find her receipt with the due dates for her books on it, she did not technically have a due date. Finally, after I said that regardless of whether she still has her date slip, there are multiple venues for checking when books are due back, she relented and deigned to pay her charges, saying 'it's ok, it's ok, it's not your fault!' ummm....I know?

Another man threatened to sue the town council because the public PCs had slow internet, and since users at the main branch are only granted an hour a day on the internet, we were preventing him from watching the full episode of Celebrity Big Brother :/

[8 replies](#) · active 131 weeks ago



Megano! · 174 weeks ago

+18

I worked at a call centre for a major American cell phone company one summer, and HOO BOY. So many stories, ranging from creepy dudes telling me I have a hot voice and must be hot and where do I live, to the guy who gave his ex-girlfriend his account password, so when they broke up she bought All The Things and he wanted a refund we couldn't give him. (It's funny now, but annoying at the time because I worked 3pm -12:30am, and it was my last call of the day and he would NOT GO AWAY.)

[7 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



winterbymorning · 174 weeks ago

+71

Another time, this couple came into the store. I greeted them and explained the sale we had going on. The man listened politely and asked a few questions; the woman had a sour look on her face, wouldn't look at me, and didn't say a word the entire time. They browsed for a few minutes and then turned to leave.

I said, "Have a nice day!"

The man said, "Thanks, you too!"

The woman finally broke her silence to snap at him, "Why are you *talking* to her?!"

It was kind of an ego boost that she considered me a threat because I remember thinking she was a lot more attractive than me. But mostly it made me sad for her that she was so insecure. I wanted to say, "Lady, right now I'm thinking about how I get to close up shop in an hour, and then I can get a smoothie on my way home and spend the evening in bed reading erotic fanfiction. What I am definitely not thinking of is your boyfriend's wiener and how I could get in touch with it. Calm down."

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



notreallysure12 · 174 weeks ago

+16

I had a friend that worked at Barnes and Noble. One afternoon a woman left the store in a huff and called him from out front to complain that there was a "small black child in the children's section with an erection."

Not sure what her expectations were really? People are the worst sometimes.



thestonefruit · 174 weeks ago

+29

When I worked at a coffee shop in my hometown, there was a guy who came in every morning for a small coffee and a bottle of Odwalla orange juice. He'd put \$1 if we shook the juice for him.

It took a few weeks but I eventually realized he liked watching our breasts and asses jiggle. >:-/

[7 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

 [germanrocketcat](#) · 174 weeks ago

+10

I just started a coffee shop cashier job. Woo boy. Lots of vignettes to look forward to! My favorite so far are the people who are on the phone the ENTIRE TIME they are giving me their complicated order, with multiple drinks and baked goods. Bonus points when they are doing that "hold the phone in front of your face instead of next to your ear" thing, making them speak louder. Also could not just, like, have your convo partner hold for A MINUTE while you relay your order to me. But I guess that would make me seem more important than your person on the line....for all of 60 seconds.

Retail question: what are polite ways to ask people to repeat themselves? We get a lot of customers who are not native English speakers and sometimes I have a hard time understanding, especially when they speak quietly. I know it is embarrassing and uncomfortable for both of us when I have to ask them to repeat it, like, 4 times...what to do? I also want to avoid seeming like a jerk because I know there's a lot of issues wrapped up in "having an accent" and, yeah.

[8 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

 [cheddaronrye](#) · 174 weeks ago

+71

When I worked in a bookstore, there was a woman we called Bible Lady. Bible Lady ordered these tiny little Gideon bibles, and then would proceed to stand there next to the register, tear the little pages out, and eat them. While doing this, she would explain to every customer who approached the register that she thought I looked like a ballerina, or someone who would be in Town & Country. She would then be like, "Don't you think she's pretty?" (referring to me), and if the customer wasn't super enthusiastic about my looks, she would lean towards them, spitting little flecks of bible in their face as she spoke, and say, "TEL-L.HER.SHE'S.PRETTY." I would be protesting and asking her to go away while this all went on, but she was so damn stubborn that she wouldn't leave until she'd not only confirmed with a few customers that I was pretty, but had also worked her way through one bible and purchased another for the road.

She also stuffed her shoes with the bible because "the devil enters you through your feet" and would chuck holy water at my face randomly. A delight, really, when you're held captive behind a register and can't escape.

[4 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

 [yrpretendfriend](#) · 174 weeks ago

+30

working at a bougie natural foods grocery store in produce:

"Are there any better Roma tomatoes in the back?"

"Um let me check" (no) *brings out box of identical tomatoes*

"Oh no nevermind, these are the same" *goes on to talk about her raw diet and how much better the produce is in another city*

customer on the phone: "do you have organic tomatillos?"

"no we only have conventional"

"where are they from?"

"Mexico"

"Oh no that's terrible did you know in Mexico they fertilize their crops with human poop?! So many chemicals, you're basically just eating cancer"

"ummm... ok"

"can you cut open this avocado to see if it's overripe?"

"um no" (actually sometimes we did this because some customers were obnoxious about it)

"which yam is the sweetest?"

gives different answer every time

one time a customer yelled "HEY VEGETABLE LADY!" at my coworker to ask her what the price was. The price was in front of her. We have nametags.

[4 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Myrtle · 174 weeks ago

+12

I'm fascinated at the number of people who would walk past my younger co-workers to come to me, then mock me about my age and "they didn't know (company) hired people as old as me!" "Oh, good, an old person!" I was stunned at retail. I'd previously worked nice hours for nice pay and was respected as a knowledgeable professional. A manager told me to tell them I was going on break, and walk away. She later quit working for the company. My younger co-workers were mocked and insulted for their age, too. By people who should have known better.



bibliobotic · 174 weeks ago

+41

My retail jobs were all garbage, but most of my personal vignettes are from the years I spent as a barista at Starbucks. Listen, no barista cares about your objection to the cup size names. Baristas didn't pick those names. Baristas don't care about your outrage that "tall" is the smallest size on the menu now. Baristas have heard it all before, probably multiple times every single day they work.

Baristas don't care if you say "medium," either, but when they repeat your drink order, they are going to say "grande," and it's not because they're snottily correcting you, it's because they are required to do this. Please tip your baristas.

ETA: I forgot my personal favorite daily occurrence, which is the Old White Guy (always, without fail) who grumpily exclaims, "I just want a regular cup of coffee! Can't I just get a regular cup of coffee???!!!" Sirs, calm down.

[8 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Natteringwpride · 174 weeks ago

+27

This article speaks to my soul. I worked...a lot of customer service throughout my schooling years. I now have a tic which consists of yelling "THE CUSTOMER IS NEVER RIGHT AND USUALLY LYING TO YOU. AND ALWAYS TIP YOUR SERVER." to surprised unfortunates who try to discuss service jobs with me.

Also- in terms of customers who try to intimidate you in to compliance with things? I used to work at a rec center, and six foot tall muscle heads would periodically try to stare me down when I worked the front desk (idiots- there were cameras everywhere and two of my coworkers were former Marines turned personal trainers). Scarier than them by far? Soccer moms. I had two soccer moms get in my face to scream at me for daring to reprimand their spawn and I swear I saw Hell while they yelled at me.

Shudder

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago



Cricket · 174 weeks ago

+12

I work in a shop with a cafe component. My favorite is when I asked people what milk they want for their lattes, and after I tell them we have whole, skim, or soy milk they reply with, "oh, do you have almond milk?"

...no. If we had almond milk, I would have included that in my list of milk offerings! And some of these customers are repeat offenders who hear the milk spiel e v e r y time.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

**Systeme D** · 174 weeks ago**+19**

People who haven't worked retail (or in a similar industry dealing with CUSTOMERS) should not be allowed to shop. Period.

When I worked in a bookstore, I had CUSTOMERS ask me the stupidest things. "I'm looking for a book. It has a green cover. Do you know it?"

[3 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

**Echolocation** · 174 weeks ago**+13**

What is with the thing where only one person in a couple (usually the dude in a heterosexual couple but it happens either way) can give me their orders? I will say, "What size?" and they turn to the person who says, "Medium," and then the Orderer tells me, "They want medium." Yes, I know, I am right there, we don't have to play telephone.

**Illla** · 174 weeks ago**+14**

I work in a hotel, the cheap kind. This happened today:

When it's dark, the lobby is locked and all guests must use the security window.

10:30 at night, a guest starts yanking at the locked door like a monkey banging on the bars, utterly confused in the face of the "Lobby Closed, Please Use Guest Window" sign with the giant arrow. He doesn't stop until I come to the window, say "It's locked" and ask how I could help him.

"Open the door," he demands, "I need to use your bathroom." (yank, yank)

I explain that I can't open the door after hours for anyone.

"But someone's taking a shower in the room and I have to go." (further yanking on the door)

I repeat that I can't open the door.

With a final yank on the door, he sighs heavily, the most persecuted creature ever born, and proclaims, as if I had just slaughtered his puppy:

"Man, I really need to dump a load" and looks at me expectantly, "Open the door."

I walked away from the window.

He left eventually.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

**Glen H** · 174 weeks ago**+2**

I don't work directly in retail but do a lot of repair work in service stations, so I get to see a lot of what goes on. Just remember the girl behind the counter doesn't set the fuel prices, so if you want to vent about how much it costs to fill your oversized SUV tell it to someone who cares! (and I'm pretty sure Toasties aren't going to carry on like that anyhow).

**V_Hardapple** · 174 weeks ago**+2**

Oh god I just went back and read the hospital ones and everyone's comments and oh god why...?! The worst. Hugs to everyone.

**deleted3602194** · 174 weeks ago**+7**

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I'm just genuinely baffled why most people find it difficult to be nice to retail workers. (And sometimes I wonder if my smiling to everyone is just evidence that I'm 'too nice,' like it's a bad thing?) One time there was a lady who shouted down the entire staff in my fave bookshop. Most times, people -even my parents- just ignore retail workers. It's sad. So I make it a point to reply somehow, even if just a polite "No, thank you" to land developing salesmen with their flyers.

[2 replies](#) · active 174 weeks ago

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Hey Ladies: We Wrote a Book!



Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," As I Understand It



Lord Byron's "Fare Thee Well," or "I Just Think It's Funny How"



Questions I Have Asked During The Only Episode Of *Doctor Who* I Have Ever Seen Until My Friend Said "Okay, Mallory, Why Don't You Write Your Questions Down And Ask Them All After We're Done Watching?"



Joan Didion and Anna Wintour: Best Friends Forever



Movie Yelling With Nicole and Mallory: *The Hunt for Red October*



Harvard Magazine Personal Advertisements' Many Synonyms For "Rich" or "Thin"



Go On, Get Out Of Here



A note on The Toast

ABOUT
DONATE
CONTACT
SUBMIT
LEGAL

