



Monterey County Hospitality Association
The Voice of Your Hospitality Community

GUEST SERVICE/HOSPITALITY TRAINING



Great customer service consists of many things in regular times, but in this time of COVID19, customer service has never been more important. The goal is to offer the same excellent hospitality we always offer our guests, but with some added new twists to fit new circumstances.



SMILE THROUGH YOUR MASK

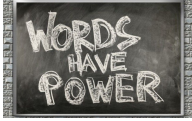
A smile isn't just your mouth. With a mask covering your mouth you can smile...

- 1) With your eyes: When you smile your eyes narrow a bit as your cheek muscles flex.
- 2) With your voice: Just as smiling changes your voice when you talk on the phone, it also changes your voice when you talk through a mask. Project your voice a bit more (talking through a mask and speaking to someone 6 feet away), but be careful that added volume doesn't make your voice sound angry.

Exercise: Stand in front of the mirror and smile. Watch how your eyes change. Now put a mask on and smile under the mask. See if you get that same "smiling eyes" look (clue, watch the corners of your eyes in particular). If you don't see it at first, keep practicing.

Exercise: Put your mask on and practice a typical warm welcome/greeting for a customer. Is your speech clear or do you need to slow down/enunciate a bit more to compensate for the mask? If you can practice with a partner at 6 feet away, they can give you some good feedback. If nobody is available to practice with, try using your smartphone to record what you look & sound like. Playback is good feedback.

Exercise: The next time you're shopping or in some other situation where you can observe others wearing a mask, look at their facial expressions and try to guess if they're smiling or frowning. What did you see that made you guess one way or the other? If they speak to you, how does their voice sound—warm and friendly or just all business? How do you want others to perceive you when you interact with them under your mask?



WORDS HAVE MEANING

For guests who have been housebound, words have special meaning right now. And how you say them can make a difference. Vary the pitch of your voice to imply excitement or happiness.

Offer follow-up phrases like the ones below (and remember to smile when you say them):

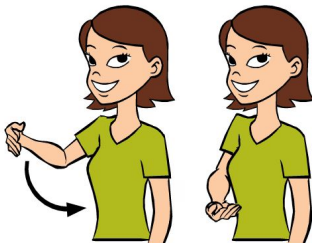
- *I'm so happy you came in today.*
- *It's great to see you. How have you been?*
- *Is there anything else I may help you with today?*
- *I appreciate you stopping by. Hope to see you soon.*
- *Thank you for your business.*



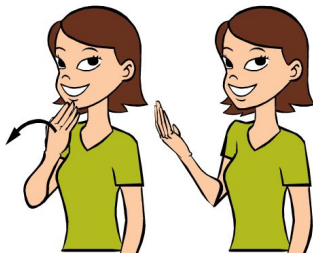
ADD GESTURES TO YOUR WORDS

You can make up for some of the diminished communications with guests by adding in some simple gestures. Waving has become universal. Use simple sign language (ASL) gestures for “welcome,” “thank you” and “you’re welcome.” These signs are almost universally understood, particularly when coupled with the spoken word. They can help ensure you get your meaning across to your guests.

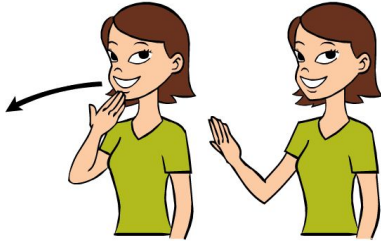
Exercise: Practice the ASL gesture for Welcome



Exercise: Practice the ASL gesture for Thank You



Exercise: Practice the ASL gesture for You're Welcome



USE POSITIVE BODY LANGUAGE

Take an open stance and face your customer. Don't cross your arms or keep them behind your back. A face-up palm conveys openness and honesty when speaking to or directing your customer.

Exercise: Practice positive body language. Lean *forward* and *turn your ear toward your customer when they are speaking*. This type of body language indicates that you genuinely value and are eager to hear what the other person is saying or asking.



BE FRIENDLY—AT A DISTANCE

We instinctively react to the distance between ourselves and others (i.e., if someone gets too close and invades our personal space, we feel uncomfortable.) As social animals, we want to be close to others to better connect and communicate. Social distancing requirements go against our natural tendencies. We need to use positive reminders about social distancing that also reinforce our role as hosts and hostesses.



REASSURE GUESTS

Let people know your job is to help keep them safe. This may include reminders about social distancing and wearing a mask, so guests will know you're looking out for them.

Exercise: Brainstorm some positive, on-brand ways to remind guests about social distancing. Is there a symbol or mascot that you can use? For example, the Monterey Conference Center has adopted the seal, asking people to stay at least one seal apart.

Exercise: Model good practices yourself and be sure you are practicing safe social distance. If someone is too close, try to back up and say, “We ‘otter’ remember the social distancing rules.”

Exercise: Reference visual cues for social distancing. Help remind guests by referring to appropriate signage or pointing out nearby objects that are approximately 6 feet (i.e. six 12-inch floor tiles, or the length of a six-foot table).



DIFFICULT GUEST(S)

Reviewing the basics of how to deal with difficult guests can be a good reminder:

1. Listen. Do talk over the customer or argue with them.
2. Build rapport through empathy. Put yourself in the customer's shoes.
3. Lower your voice. If the customer gets louder, speak slowly, in a low tone.
4. Respond as if you are not talking only to the customer but to an audience.
5. Know when to call for backup. Sometimes the problem can't be solved at your level.
6. Stay calm.
7. Don't take it personally.
8. Remember everyone has an occasional bad day.

Sometimes a guest will have an attitude that “rules are for everyone else” and they may not feel the need to comply with requirements for facial covering or social distancing.

Use the Feel, Felt, Found Approach

I feel face masks can be uncomfortable ...

I felt the same way, but

I found that if you know the face mask rules, you'll feel more in control.

- “You can take your mask off in these areas (dining, outdoors, etc.) and we need you to keep it on in this area.”
- “You can stay close to your family members and try to maintain six feet from others.”
- “Part of keeping all of us safe is that we all ... (wear our facial covering, maintain a safe distance from others, etc.)”

Use the Oreo Cookie Approach

(Good news sandwiched between two thin disks of uncomfortable truths)

“Although face masks can be uncomfortable” ... (*truth*)

“You can take your mask off in these areas: at your table when dining or outdoors (*good news*)

*“But if you’re unable to comply with our safety requirements -- keeping your masks on, staying six feet from others -- we may not be able to serve you.” (*truth*)

Step It Up

Psychologically, there are a two reasons that motivate people to obey the law/guidelines:

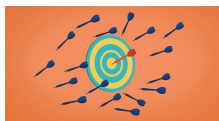
1. To avoid legal consequences and sanctions.
2. It possesses legitimate authority in their eyes.

The good news is that the law is on your side. The Monterey County Health Department and State of California require facial covering and social distancing ...

So If you need to dial up the seriousness of the request to comply, you might try:

- “Our ability to stay open is based on all of us observing the rules about facial covering and safe distancing.”
- “This is a legal requirement for our operation and we need all our staff and guests to comply.”
- “For the safety of all our guests—including you and your family—we need you to comply with these safety rules.”
- * “If you’re unable to comply with our safety requirements, we may not be able to serve you here.”
- “We can provide a mask for your use if you don’t have one with you.”

*There may be adults that are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, so you may need to make allowances for these exceptions.



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

It is important to remember you are part of a team. You aren’t on this road alone, although you might be the first team member on the playing field.

Research has proven that roleplaying is the most frequently recommended customer service training exercise. So practice with your co-workers; one of you in the customer’s role and the other as the service representative. Act out how each side might handle the given scenario, and once the issue is resolved, switch places. This will help you understand each side of the situation.



HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE

Your attitude and your actions speak volumes. Main the attitude of the trained hospitality professional you are and act as one.

