

Scripts: Responding to Difficult Guest Situations during a Pandemic



Providing positive guest experiences during the time of a pandemic can be challenging at times, especially when some guests are not following businesses' established Health & Safety protocols.

go2HR has developed this script document for frontline staff to refer to in tough situations. Our team of HR and training experts have developed scenarios which staff could likely encounter in their workplace, and suggested scripts on how to respond to non-compliant guests.

SCENARIO 1: Guest is not wearing a mask on approaching the building

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Hello, welcome to <business>. We are asking all guests to wear masks. Do you have a mask with you, or may I provide one for you?

Guest: Of course, I forgot. Will put it on right away.

Employee: Thank you for your understanding. We really appreciate it!

Alternate Scenario

Employee: Welcome to <business>. We require all guests to wear masks at all times.

Guest: I left mine in the car and really don't want to walk back and pick it up.

Employee: That's okay, we have complementary single-use masks available. I am happy to provide you with one.

Guest: I think I will be fine without one.

Employee: I understand, but I am afraid we are not going to be able to provide you service today without a mask.

Guest: Why not? I don't feel sick, so I don't see why this is such a big deal.

Employee: The mandatory mask policy is required by law as per the provincial Health Officer order, ensuring that all our guests and staff stay safe. I understand that this is inconvenient but it is necessary for everyone to follow the rules.

Guest: Well, I'm not going to wear one, so you're losing my business if you don't let me in.

Employee: We appreciate your business, but are unable to make exceptions to the provincial Health and Safety regulations. We will be happy to serve you with a mask on anytime you choose to return."

OR

Employee: We appreciate your business, but are unable to make exceptions to the Health and Safety protocol at this time. As an alternative, we could offer you take-out service or delivery"

SCENARIO 2: Guest does not sanitize their hands upon entry

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Welcome to our store. May I remind you to sanitize your hands, please?

Guest: Sure thing.

Employee: Thank you, I really appreciate your understanding.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: Welcome. We are asking all guests to use hand sanitizer prior to entering. Please help yourself.

Guest: I don't like this stuff.

Employee: We do require all guests to sanitize their hands for us to be able to provide service. If you have your own sanitizer, you are welcome to use that instead.

Guest: No, don't have my own as I don't like sanitizers in general.

Employee: So sorry, but we will unfortunately not be able to grant you access to the store.

SCENARIO 3: Diners cruise to different tables in a restaurant, pub, or bar

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Hello all. Just a gentle reminder that during these times visiting other tables is not permitted, sorry.

Guest: Okay, got it.

Employee: Thank you for understanding.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: I am sorry to interrupt, but all guests are required to stay at their own table during these times.

Guest: We are just going over for a quick hello, not a big deal.

Employee: I understand, but it is a requirement for all guests to be seated at their assigned table at all times, unless getting up to use the washroom. We cannot serve any guests who are not sitting down at their own table.

Guest: That's okay, I'll just sit down here then!

Employee: Unfortunately, that is not an option right now. All guests must be seated at the table they were assigned when coming in.

Guest: But these are my friends from work – I see them all the time, so it's not unsafe.

Employee: I understand, but we cannot make exceptions at this time. The protocols are in place to keep all our guests and staff safe. If you like, you may catch up with your friend outside at a safe distance, and return to your assigned seat once inside. I'm afraid I cannot provide you with service otherwise.

Guest: Fine.

Employee: Thank you for understanding.

SCENARIO 4: Guest refuses to stand two-meters apart while in line at a restaurant

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Hello, the line seems to be getting compact, may I ask everyone to take a step back, there should be 2 metres between each bubble.

Guests move to accommodate the request

Employee: Thank you all for your understanding, I appreciate it.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: Thanks for visiting us today. May I ask you to stand on the circle indicated on the floor please?

Guests do not comply

Employee: Maintaining 2 meters distance in the line-up is a safety requirement at our restaurant. Please use the markings to guide you as you move along.

Guests still do not comply

Employee: If you are unable to maintain 2 meters of space between the guests in front or behind you, I will have to ask you to leave the line-up.

SCENARIO 5: Guest is not wearing mask properly in the store

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Thanks for shopping with us today. Your mask seems to have slipped down. May I ask you to adjust it please?

Guest: Oh, did not realize it. Thanks for reminding me.

Employee: Thank you for doing your part to keep us all safe.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: How are you today? We ask all guests to wear masks covering their nose, mouth, and chin. May I offer you one of our disposable masks?

Guest: I have my mouth covered, that should be enough, no?

Employee: This is a common misconception. For the mask to be effective it must cover the nose, mouth, and chin.

Guest: Yeah, I don't believe in that stuff.

Employee: Unfortunately, we cannot serve anyone who is wearing the mask incorrectly. Please adjust your mask to continue shopping in our store.

SCENARIO 6: Guest wants the hotel room cleaned while they are in it

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Good morning. Your room can be cleaned every day. Please let us know when you will be out, and we will clean your room during that time.

Guest: I will be out in the afternoon, so you can service the room then.

Employee: That's great, thanks for being so accommodating.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: We are happy to clean your room when it is vacant. When would you like us to return?

Guest: I am not going out today, so you can go ahead and clean while I am working at my desk.

Employee: I'm sorry, your room cannot be serviced with you present. May I bring some fresh linens to your door instead?

SCENARIO 7: On the ski hill, skiers are standing too close together in the lift line up

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Hope you are having a great ski day today. Please remember the 2 meters distance applies in the lift line up, thank you.

Guest: Sure thing, what a great day today.

Employee: Thank you for working with us, I appreciate it!

Alternate Scenario

Employee: Sorry Sir, please wait for a moment as we require at least 2 metres between each rider.

Guests keeps on pushing forward

Employee: I'm sorry but you cannot move forward at this time. Please maintain the 2-metre distance to keep your spot in the line-up.

SCENARIO 8: In the elevator, guests are ignoring the maximum occupancy protocol

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Sorry to keep you waiting, but only two guests from different bubbles are allowed in one elevator, for everyone's safety.

Guest: No problem, we'll wait for the next one.

Employee: Thank you, I appreciate your patience.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: I'm sorry but only two guests from different bubbles are permitted in one elevator. Thank you for patiently waiting for the next one.

Guest: There is enough space for another person.

Employee: Yes, the elevator has capacity to fit more passengers, but it is not safe to do so at this time. Please wait for the next car, it should arrive shortly.

Guest: No, no that's okay. No one here minds.

Employee: I'm sorry but I cannot send the elevator up with you at this time. Please step out of the car so the first guests may travel safely.

SCENARIO 9: Guests are complaining about waiting outside in the cold for access to the lodge

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Thank you for your patience, we have asked all guests to spend only one hour in the lodge for lunch today. It should only be another 10 minutes before we can let you in.

Guest: Thanks for the update.

Employee: Thank you, we will have you in and warm as soon as possible.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: We appreciate your patience as we safely accommodate all our guests today. May I offer you a cookie and hot tea while you wait?

Guest: No, thank you. I am hungry and want to go inside now to order my lunch.

Employee: I understand. We are currently at our maximum capacity, but the wait shouldn't be long. I can take your phone number and call you once a table is available, and in the meantime, you can warm up while you wait in the gift shop.

SCENARIO 10: Guests want to sit in a group of more than 6 people in a restaurant

Ideal Scenario

Employee: Thank you for coming in today. Just to let you know, we are currently not permitted to seat groups larger than 6 at the same table.

Guest: That's okay, as long as we can have two tables close to each other.

Employee: Sure, we can arrange that. Thank you for understanding.

Alternate Scenario

Employee: How are you today? I'm counting 8 in your group. Just to let you know, we are currently unable to seat groups larger than 6 together, but we can seat you as two groups of 4 at two different tables.

Guest: No, that is not going to work for us. We all want to sit at one table as this is our day out together.

Employee: I completely understand, but I am afraid this is not possible with the current protocols. I can make sure that the two tables are close to each other, so you are not too far away.

Note: This response should include reminders about no pulling tables together or cruising around

Things to Remember

- ✓ Body language is 55% of the message, tone of voice is 38% and words are only 7%. So, these sentences require delivery with sincerity, tact and confidence
- ✓ It is always better to be proactive rather than reactive, think of how to inform the guest before arrival
- ✓ Where this document says guests, feel free to change it to clients, patients, participants, or students, etc.
- ✓ Avoid saying the words "Pandemic" or "COVID-19" or "Rules" they are sad reminders of our current situation
- ✓ Remember the guests are unsure of the changing rules and protocols, a gentle reminder works 99% of the time
- ✓ Practise these responses with your teams and find the ones that suit your personality or the personality of the business
- ✓ To every "No" there is an alternative
- ✓ These guests are our bread and butter, we want them to return to us in the future, so do what you can to remain professional
- ✓ "Be kind, be calm, be safe"