

Retail Tips

LESSONS LEARNED OVER A YEAR IN THE WORKPLACE

by Amanda Strapp, Self Advocate



I HAVE WORKED AT WALMART for over a year now. I have been sharing the lessons I learned on my blog, hoping that it will teach others about what to do and what not to do. I have condensed all those lessons into eight major tips that I follow when it comes to working in retail.

Speak Up: When you are having a problem in your work, let your employers know right away. The employers have a responsibility to make your workplace as safe as possible, so they need to know if there is a problem such as a fellow associate being a bully or broken glass that needs to be cleaned up. That way, they can handle the problem properly. Also, managers want to support their workers in any way they can, such as adjusting a schedule or giving you a day off. Don't be afraid to speak up; the employers aren't bad guys that are going to just say "No" right away.

Treat your Co-Workers with respect: You are going to be working with them, whether you like it or not, so you have to be nice to them. Don't be a bully, or try to make them feel bad. Treat them the way that you would like to be treated by them. It makes a better work environment for everyone.

Strive to Improve Your Performance: Your work performance isn't always going to be perfect. Once in awhile, your managers will tell you about something that is affecting your performance, such as too many bathroom trips or taking too long on breaks. When that happens, don't get upset. Try to follow the manager's advice and work on those things, such as waiting until break to go to the bathroom, or keeping a closer eye on the

time. It may seem like nothing is happening, but over time, you will improve on those problems, and eventually overcome them. If you think you are doing something too much, ask the manager if it's the case before you do so. It may be a small thing that the manager doesn't think needs fixing, but it shows that you are self-aware and want to improve your service to them.

Keep Calm: Some customers are going to get under your skin, regardless of what you do. But if you start getting too frustrated, you may end up taking it out on your customers. This not only makes you look bad, but also the store you are working in looks bad as well. If you start feeling frustrated, take a few deep breaths.

Don't Refuse Customers: There are going to be times when you will be tempted to refuse a customer. This can be for various reasons, such as having too many items, or because they look unfriendly. You shouldn't refuse to serve someone unless they pose an actual threat to you. The reason for this is because refusing customers would make you look unprofessional in the eyes of the customer and your employer. Instead, when you get the urge to avoid a customer, don't do it. Serve the customer anyway, regardless of the reason why you don't want to serve him/her.

Amanda Strapp is an aspiring journalist who attended Sheridan College's Print Journalism program. She currently works as a cashier and shares her experiences on the job as well as other musings on her blog <https://daschundliver.wordpress.com/>

Don't get into fights: Some customers will act inappropriately. Some may yell at you, or physically threaten you. When it happens, don't freak out or start a fight. Instead, call the manager right away. They will try to help the customer at first. But if they can't help, they will call security to deal with the customer. Don't deal with the customer yourself if they pose a threat to you.

Watch what you say: Sometimes customers are going to want to chat with you as you scan their things. Sometimes, you want to start up a conversation yourself. When that happens, start with something such as "How was your day?" Or you can comment on something such as, "Do you have a dog at home?" or "Nice dress." But be careful what you say and what you comment on. Customers will not appreciate it if they think you are being inappropriate or disrespectful.

Don't play around with their things: Occasionally, customers will have things that catch your eye, such as a spinner toy or a llama doll. Don't do anything other than scan it. Customers may not like you fooling around with their things, and could end up leaving. ■

