When 'Happy to help' becomes a problem

Look at these phrases. Who usually says them? Mark them **C** (customer) or **SA** (sales assistant)

1 ___ Do you need any help?
2 ___ What size are you?
3 ___ Do you have this in blue?
4 ___ Have a nice day!
5 ___ No, thanks, I'm just looking.
6 ___ Are you looking for anything in particular?
7 ___ It's a bit big – have you got a smaller size?
8 ___ Can I try these on?
9 ___ Shall I put your receipt in the bag?
10 ___ The changing rooms are over there.

Read the text and think if you have ever been in such situation? What did you do? If not, how would you react?

It's my lunch break. I work near King's Cross, a major London train station, and I've gone to the shopping mall there to buy a new wallet. It's a very simple shopping trip. At least, I think it's simple, but five minutes later, I'm not so sure.



As I enter the shop, a sales assistant at the far end shouts at me:

'Hi, how are you doing today? Do you need any help?'

I answer:

'I'm fine. I'm just looking, thanks.'

That should be the end of the conversation, and I go to look at the wallets.

'Hello, do you need any help?'

Here is another sales assistant, who I will call SA2.

Me: 'I'm fine, thanks. I'm just looking.'

I don't know why he needed to ask me this, as I'm certain he heard me tell his colleague.

SA2: 'Are you going anywhere nice?'

This seems a strange question. I expected, 'Are you looking for anything in particular today?' As I don't answer, he repeats the question.

SA2: 'Where do you work?'

Me: 'Oh, er, I work in an office round the corner.'

I try to look at wallets, and hope he goes away.

SA2: 'Do you like football?'

It's a simple question, but I know that if I say yes, he will ask me questions about 'your team'. I'm not sure how this helps me to buy a wallet.

Me: 'Er, it's OK.'

SA2: 'Are you going to watch the England match?'

I want him to stop.

Me: 'No, I'm not.'

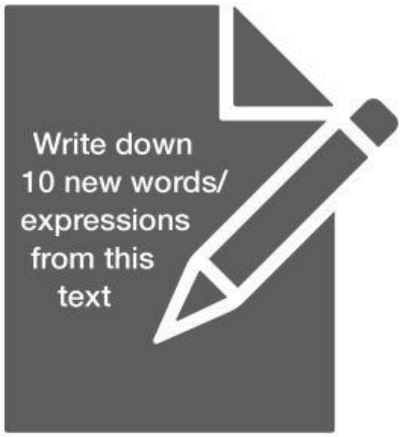
I walk to another part of the shop. The sales assistant follows me.

SA2: 'What are you doing after work?'

Me: 'I'm having dinner with a friend.'

SA2: 'Are you doing anything for the rest of the day?'

Me: 'Um, thank you for your help!'



I run away without a wallet. His never-ending questions lost him the sale. Shopping didn't use to be like this. In the USA, perhaps, but not in the UK. It is a big improvement that sales assistants nowadays acknowledge your existence and are sometimes actually helpful. But there's a difference between being helpful and trying to pretend you're a shopper's best friend.

LIVEWORKSHEETS