

When 'Happy to help' becomes a problem

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Do you need any help? | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Are you looking for anything in particular? |
| 2 <input type="checkbox"/> What size are you? | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> It's a bit big – have you got a smaller size? |
| 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have this in blue? | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Can I try these on? |
| 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Have a nice day! | 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Shall I put your receipt in the bag? |
| 5 <input type="checkbox"/> No, thanks, I'm just looking. | 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 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!'

Write down
10 new words/
expressions
from this
text



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.