

Bartender Quick-Reference: Customer Behavior & Responses

Situation	First Response	If It Continues	Final Step
Too Loud / Disruptive	Friendly reminder: "Let's keep it down so everyone can enjoy."	Firm reminder: "We've had a couple of asks — please keep the volume down."	Close their tab and ask them to please leave for the night.
Rude to Staff	Calm, polite redirection: "I'm happy to help, but we need to keep it respectful."	One clear warning: "This is your one warning — please stop. If you can't, please leave for the night."	Ask them to leave. If they are reluctant, tell them you will call the police if they do not leave.
Had Too Much to Drink	Offer water/food: "Let's switch it up for now."	Explain safety policy: "We can't serve more alcohol tonight."	If arguing, stop service and ask them to head out.
Inappropriate Touching	Immediate stop: "That's not okay here."	If minor, warn once and monitor.	For serious/unwanted, immediate removal.
Illegal Activity	"That's not allowed here."	Report to Colby immediately.	Removal from premises.
Damaging Property	Stop action and address: "Please respect our space."	Inform they'll cover costs and must leave.	Document and report to Colby.
Minors Acting Up	Speak to parents: "We ask you to watch your kids closely."	If unsafe/disruptive, second request to parents.	Removal if no compliance.
Aggressive Behavior	Immediate request to leave the property.	Second request with warning that if they do not leave the police will be called	Call the police and inform customers they are barred and should not return.

General Rules for All Situations:

- Stay calm, neutral, and polite.
- Avoid physical contact unless in immediate danger.
- Involve coworker/police early if situation escalates.
- Log all incidents in red book and tell Colby.

One of our biggest challenges is dealing with difficult customers and there have been a lot of them lately. These customers can range from those who are simply having a bad day to those who are overly intoxicated and disruptive.

Learning how to handle these situations calmly is crucial for maintaining a safe and pleasant environment. Knowing how to spot potential problems early and addressing them confidently can make your job easier and keep other patrons happy.

Understanding Different Types of Difficult Customers

Serving alcohol often means dealing with a variety of customer behaviors. Understanding the different types of difficult customers can help you manage situations better. Some customers might be demanding. They often want service quickly and can become impatient if they feel ignored. Dealing with them involves prompt attention and clear communication about possible wait times.

Another type is the overly intoxicated customer. These patrons may be loud or disruptive. Recognizing signs of intoxication—like slurred speech or loss of balance—helps you address the problem before it escalates. **It's essential to stop serving alcohol to these customers and help them switch to non-alcoholic drinks.**

You may also encounter argumentative customers. These individuals enjoy debating or criticizing the services offered. Staying calm and listening to them without getting defensive is key. Politely agree to disagree if needed and offer solutions or alternatives to their concerns.

Lastly, you'll meet customers who are aggressive and hostile. Here are some strategies and standards for these people:

Strategies for De-Escalating Tense Situations

Knowing how to calm tense situations is vital in dealing with difficult customers. The first step is to **remain calm. Take a deep breath** and maintain a steady voice when speaking. This approach shows that you are in control and helps settle the emotions of the customer.

Listening actively can defuse anger. Give the customer your full attention without interrupting. This shows you respect them and are interested in fixing their problem. Once they share their concerns, summarize them to make sure you understand correctly, and then work together on solutions.

Use a friendly, **non-threatening body language** by standing at an angle to the customer and keeping your hands relaxed. Avoid crossing your arms or making sudden movements, as these can appear defensive and further upset the customer.

Offer choices to empower the customer. Giving them options makes them feel in control and shifts the focus away from the problem. For example, if a customer is unhappy with a drink, offer to replace it or suggest they visit a different establishment in town.

If needed, seek assistance from another team member. Sometimes, simply having another person step in can change the dynamic and help resolve the situation. By employing these strategies, you can handle difficult interactions successfully and maintain a positive environment.

Setting Boundaries to Maintain Control

Establishing clear boundaries is vital for maintaining control. Start by knowing your limits and recognizing when a customer is crossing the line. This includes excessive arguments, inappropriate language, or aggressive behavior. Firmly state the standards of acceptable behavior early on:

Explain rules without confrontation. Use “I” statements, like “I need you to lower your voice, please,” instead of directives like “You must shut up.” This reduces the chance of provoking conflict. Offer gentle reminders about the rules if patrons become unruly or loud.

Always follow through with consequences if boundaries are ignored. For instance, if a customer refuses to comply, ask them to please leave. If they refuse, tell them it is policy that if they do not leave the property when asked, you have to call the police. If they still do not leave, call the police and ask them to please come to help us with a customer who has been asked repeatedly to leave and will not. By being consistent with enforcement, patrons understand that rules protect everyone’s experience.

Implementing clear boundaries also means setting personal limits. This might involve knowing when to ask a colleague or friendly patron for help or stepping away when a situation escalates too much. Every employee should feel empowered to make decisions that uphold the safety and integrity of the environment.

Through these techniques, servers can maintain a respectful atmosphere that benefits both staff and customers, ensuring enjoyable and safe interactions.

If You Disrespect Planet, So Will the Customers

We must be consistent with EVERYONE. No one is allowed in the kitchen or behind the bar or beer closet area. No one is allowed to stay after hours.

If you allow customers (friends or strangers) to run the place, you will never regain control. Be in charge with a friendly, yet authoritative tone. Your customers will respect you for it.

Be mindful of the fact that this is not your bar, your party, nor your booze. Respect that someone else is paying for the supplies and products you use. Do not give things away, waste supplies or steal.