



BUSINESS ENGLISH · RESOURCE GUIDE

5 English Words a Retail Sales Assistant Should Never Say

Five words that quietly work against a sale — and what to say instead.

It's not what you say — it's the word you choose

These five words aren't grammar mistakes. They're grammatically correct, perfectly understandable, and still **work against a sale** every time they're used on the shop floor. Each one, without meaning to, puts a customer slightly on the defensive or gives them a reason to walk away.

The good news is that none of them need a complicated fix. Almost every one of these words has a warmer, more persuasive alternative that says the same thing — without the same effect.

This guide walks through the five words to watch for, why they land badly, and exactly what to say instead.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Share it with your shop floor and till staff as a quick reference. Most people only need to notice these words once or twice before the better alternative becomes automatic.



01 “No”

AVOID ~~No, we don't have that in stock.~~

SAY INSTEAD **Let me check if we can get that for you from another store.**

WHY A flat “no” ends the conversation right where the sale could still continue. Offering to check keeps the customer engaged instead of walking away empty-handed.

02 “Expensive”

AVOID ~~This one is quite expensive.~~

SAY INSTEAD **This one's from our premium range.**

WHY Calling an item “expensive” can sound like you’re discouraging the sale. Describing it by its quality or range lets the customer decide for themselves, without feeling judged.

03 “Can’t”

AVOID ~~We can't do refunds without a receipt.~~

SAY INSTEAD **I'll just need the receipt to process that refund — do you have it with you?**

WHY “Can’t” sounds like a dead end. Framing it as what you need, rather than what’s missing, keeps the tone helpful instead of restrictive.

04 “Busy”

AVOID ~~Sorry, we're really busy right now.~~

SAY INSTEAD **I'll be with you in just a moment.**

WHY Telling a customer you’re “busy” can make them feel like an interruption. A short, specific reassurance shows you’ve noticed them and they’re next.

05 “Cheap”

AVOID ~~This is our cheap option.~~

SAY INSTEAD **This is our best value option.**

WHY “Cheap” can imply poor quality, even when that’s not what you mean. “Best value” describes the same product far more positively.



Give every customer a reason to stay, not to walk away

Fluent Advance builds retail-specific English training so your team sounds warm, confident and persuasive with every customer who walks through the door.

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