13 Response Templates for Tricky Customer Service Emails

Written by Andrew Fabacuan Apr 15, 2021

Even when you're a highly skilled customer support professional who's capable of holding friendly, courteous, and helpful conversations with your customers, some conversations can get pretty tricky.

What's the best way to tell someone they can't have a refund or that you can't let them log in to an account they claim to own?

This is a chapter in our Ultimate Guide to Running a Customer Service Team. When you're ready, check out the other chapters:

- Chapter 1: 10 Key Customer Service Skills (and How to Develop Them)
- Chapter 2: 13 Response Templates for Tricky Customer Service Emails
- Chapter 3: 12 Customer Service Phrases to Use (+ 8 You Should Avoid)
- Chapter 4: 10 Ways to Deliver Consistently Great Customer Service
- Chapter 5: 41 Pro Tips on How to Hire CS Customers
- Chapter 6: 107 Customer Service Statistics and Facts You Shouldn't Ignore
- Chapter 7: Go-To Books for CS Pros: Customer Service Bookworms
- Chapter 8: The 18 Best Customer Service Software Platforms for 2021
- Chapter 9: Customer Feedback: Why It's Important + 7 Ways to Collect It
- Chapter 10: How to Set Customer Service Goals (+ 5 Example Goals)
- Chapter 11: Customer Appreciation Ideas: 17 Ways to Thank Customers
- Chapter 12: 4 Customer Success Plan Templates and How to Use Them

To make those difficult conversations easier, we've put together these templates that you can use for inspiration to craft the perfect response. Use these 13 customer service response templates to handle a wide range of off-script replies in these tricky customer service emails. Plus, each example, we've included some alternative approaches, and explained the reasoning behind the chosen answer.

Help Scout Free Plan
Want to see if they boost all cards for your team? Try our free plan!
Help Scout Free lets you collaborate on email requests in a shared inbox.
Free forever. Make better for staff across support — all for free!
Start your free plan

Jump right to your chosen example:

1. "I want a refund, pls. now!"
2. "Where are you going to call (feature)?"
3. "I want a refund!"
4. "Tweet me back!"
5. "Bring back the the exact feature!"
6. "I need access to this account!"
7. "The plan is failing!"
8. "I can't access what I don't account!"
9. "I'm not doing your job for you."
10. "I want a discount!"
11. "Your shipping costs are ridiculous!"
12. "Stop bug and understanding me."
13. "Why are you going to call (feature)?"

Download the ebook

Download this free guide by filling out the form below:

Email Address Submit

I agree to receive other communications from Help Scout.

We use cookies to send relevant content, and our data controlled by scenes. View our privacy policy for more.

1. "I want a phone call, now!"

A customer is demanding a phone call to solve their issue, but you don't offer phone support and/or don't want to call them. They may be threatening to escalate above you or cancel altogether.

Recommended approach

As a rule of since the time the one customer can feel like you are refusing to help them at all, even though it's really a comfort about where the help will come from.

Your answer should

- Be firm about what you can and can't do.
- Reassure the customer that you are there to help.
- Make it clear the customer is in control.

Example response

> Hi Jane,
>
> I understand your frustration. For some customers, a lack of phone support is a deal breaker, and that's completely understandable, but it's not something we offer at the moment.
>
> I want to help you get the answers you need, and we can definitely get that done by email. And I will need your help.
>
> If you can provide the following information, that will help us track down what's happening and figure out the best way forward:
>
> - [redacted your specific questions]
>
> I really appreciate the help, and know it's stressful when you've got work to do and you're stuck in the way. As soon as you reply, I'll be automatically notified so I can start investigating for you.
>
> You can omit this if the customer isn't threatening to leave.
>
> P.Partner yourself with the customer against the problem, and gently remind them that they are the one holding up progress.
>
> Now that you've reset the conversation, repeat you want to help them.
>
> Predicting the next sticky point because they worry about speed is being ignored. Both their time and their sanity are being there what happens to their email when it arrives.

Alternative options

- Offer live chat if possible as a personal "faster" option in a solution.
- Try offering an outbound phone call, but only if you and the customer by sticking it by email first and "first." It's confident we can solve this by email, but if we try that and still can't get you on track, then I'd be happy to call you.
- Hand off to a sensitive who can focus on a solution without having the baggage of disappointing about support channels.

2. "When are you going to add [feature]?"

A customer is asking for a product feature you have still not be added.

Recommended approach

It's a complaint when your customers come to you for help because they like your work and want to see it improve. Or they want the ability to do something they need to do, but they don't they know the truth that we're doing, today, for something that will do only.

Your answer should

- Be honest about the situation.
- Explain why.
- Acknowledge their need and address it if possible.

Example response

> Hi Tom,
>
> Thanks for the suggestion! I appreciate you explaining how it would help you out. While that feature isn't currently in our development roadmap, we are working on improvements to our [feature] to handle the majority of our customers' use cases, and we thinks utilizing our work.
>
> While we can't build exactly what you're after, I do have a suggestion that might get you most of what you want:
>
> - [your suggested workaround]*
>
> Thanks again for taking the time to talk to us! We always appreciate feedback and suggestions.
>
> *If it's a "never, ever" you can use a stronger version here, "It's not something we will be building."
>
> We're not saying "no" to you, we're saying "yes" to so many other ideas and requests.
>
> Only offer this when you have a genuinely useful option. If it's too complex or not good enough just leave it out.

Alternative options

- If you have a public roadmap, link to it and share some of the upcoming improvements.
- Sometimes, your customer would be better off with a different product, and you may help them by offering their options.

3. "I want a refund!"

When you can't or have decided not to offer the customer a refund.

Recommended approach

Asking for a refund is often a sign that the customer feels like they haven't gotten value from your product. If you can acknowledge and address that issue, the refund may become less important to them.

Your answer should

- Be explicit and give a reason if possible.
- Dig for the underlying issue.
- Listen carefully.

Example response

> Hi Lil Mac,
>
> I'm sorry to hear you're not happy with our product. While I'm unable to offer a refund* (please see our terms and conditions here*), I can offer a billing administration/credit/other alternative*.
>
> As an analogy that, though, I would love to understand your situation better and see if there's any other way we can help.
>
> Could you give me a little more detail about what you needed to get done? It looks like you've been investigating of what they are trying to do, and where they get stuck, is that right?
>
> If you have a few moments to elaborate on that, I can talk to the team here, and we can give you our best advice.

Alternative options

- Be upfront about your decision to avoid miscommunication.
- If you have a policy on refunds, link to it directly.
- Give your support team a range of non-refund options if you can.

4. "Tweet me back."

When your customer is on a social channel, but you need to move them over to another channel to answer effectively.

Recommended approach

You should expect the customer's choice whenever you can, but if you need to move them, explain why and reassure them that you will resolve their question.

Your answer should

- Avoiding inaccurate information.
- Minimize the work of the customer.
- Retain customer confidence.

Example response

> @Harriet Sorry for the trouble, let's get this sorted out. We're based in our our engineers*, so I'm glad we at email thread for you with all the relevant information* you've shared. It shouldn't be an issue! Email Jane Doe*. How do you use Acme?
>
> 1. Explain why you need to have them switch channels.
> 2. Reassure the customer that they won't have to repeat themselves.
> 3. Keeping the same team member in the conversation builds confidence.

Alternative options

- Whenever possible, take the question to completion in the same channel your customer started with.
- Explain the issue, and let your customer choose an alternate channel from the possible options.
- In the case of legal restrictions, make it clear up front where you can and can't help people.

5. "Bring back the the file-export feature!"

A customer is upset that a feature or product has been removed.

Recommended approach

Be empathetic to the fact when you have access to something you value, so make sure to express that sympathy and show your customer control.

Your answer should

- Empathize with the customer.
- Give them control on why the change was made.
- Present the hopeful future.

Example response

> Hi Marcia,
>
> Thanks for letting us know about your situation. I can understand that it's frustrating to lose a feature that you've come to rely on like that. While it's not something we can bring back right now, we do have a few options that may help you through this and hopefully benefit you in the long term.
>
> The short answer is that this was a complex feature to maintain. It wasn't being used by the majority of our customers, which meant we were spending a lot of development time and resources on something that wasn't making our product better for most people.
>
> By making the hard decision to drop it, we've been able to move those resources to improvements that will help all our customers. We've also implemented a workaround that is available in your account much sooner than we otherwise could have achieved.
>
> I realize that doesn't solve your immediate issue, though. Some of our other customers have found 'rebrandmyfile' to a good substitute for that functionality. If you'd like to share more detail on how you were using it, I'd be happy to give you my best advice.
>
> If it's never going to happen, it's more kind to make that clear right away that been there hoping for it.
>
> Instead of over-apologizing for the removal, focus on what benefits that removal allows for all customers.

Alternative options

- If this is not a "set in stone" decision and could be rolled back, then be sure to not just record the feedback, but ask questions to understand the particular usage of each customer. The answer may not be rolling back, for example, it may be changing future plans to allow for other use cases.

6. "I need access to this account!"

A customer wants access to an account, but can't for security reasons.

Recommended approach

Customer service teams are increasingly the target of social engineering attacks. Being secure while also providing service is a tricky line to walk.

Your answer should

- Be clear about what is needed to gain access.
- Position your team as a protector, not a blocker.
- Rely on additional utilities.

Example response

> Hello Rafi,
>
> I understand you just want to get into your account and back to work, and I am here to help you. However, as I'm sure you can understand, we have to be careful to protect the details that you and all of our customers trust us to store*. You can read up on our security policy and practices here*.
>
> Here's what you can do to regain access:
>
> - [redacted your steps to lockout]*
>
> If any of those steps are unclear, let me know, and I'm happy to explain further. I know it can be a pain, but the protection of all of our customers' data is a crucial and necessary security measure. I'm unable to give you access otherwise.
>
> Thank you for your understanding.
>
> *Align yourself and your customer against outside people who might try to access their data.
>
> *Mentioning legal constraints (if any) can be helpful, and most people will more easily accept that reason.

Alternative options

- Security isn't really an issue for antisocials, but you can reduce some of the stress by having both options and directions on how to regain account access (and what happens if they can't).

7. "Your plugin is failing!"

A customer needs support for a third-party tool or system about which you can't answer detailed questions.

Recommended approach

Customers don't always know the right person to contact when they run into issues. Make the process as smooth as possible for them, even if you have to send them elsewhere.

Your answer should

- Tell them why you are sending them away.
- Make it easy for them to take the necessary steps.
- Be clear that you're still there to support them.

Example response

> Hey Ryan,
>
> I'd love to help you with this, but I'm afraid we don't have access to that information on our side*. I can help you with questions relating to Your product, but in the cases, the vendor system's support team will be best positioned to investigate and help you move forward.
>
> To save you some time, I've looked up their support options, and you can send your question to their 'contact form'.
>
> Let me know if that helps little information in your request*. Your closer support is the best option.
>
> If their team needs any further information from our side, just let us know, and we can pick up from there. Sorry I couldn't be of more help directly, but thanks again for using Your vendor, and best of luck getting this issue resolved quickly.
>
> *Add some details about why you are unable to help them out.
>
> *Express their choices of success by helping them write a clear support question to the third-party team.

Alternative options

- If you have an developer some skills in the third-party system, consider creating your own knowledge base entries for the most common issues.
- Pro-tip: high-value relationships, consider submitting a question to the third party yourself, and then forward the answer to your customer. Shows that experience and you're in it together.
- If you have a software product, try to make it easier for customers to identify third-party issues by setting clear error messages.

8. "I can't believe it still hasn't arrived!"

You've told the customer what will happen, but they're angry about waiting after two days for resolution.

Recommended approach

From your side, everything is working exactly as it should, yet the customer is still upset. Try to understand the root cause of their frustration. Is it the inconvenience of having to wait something longer, instead of a customer who's unreasonably angry about waiting? They're empathetic and take the customer's side, even when nothing can be changed.

Your answer should

- Avoid being positively defensive.
- Be empathetic and understanding.

- Give them a chance to feel heard, not blamed.
- Avoid accepting blame incorrectly.

Example response

> Hi Innocent,
>
> I can totally appreciate how frustrating it is to be waiting for your delivery! I wish I could just snap my fingers and get it to you sooner (when will those Star Trek transporters be invented). It might help to start with some background on what happens* on our end once you place an order.
>
> When you ordered, the shipping process started on that same day automatically. Our warehouse team in Ohio received your order and prepared it for our shipping company, so it is well on the way to you. You should receive delivery on <date>, according to their last update.
>
> To help you know what to expect, during the ordering process we show an estimated delivery date, perhaps that wasn't visible enough for you?I'll love your feedback on that so we can improve for the future. In this case, it looks like we're going to beat that estimate by about three days.
>
> Once your parcel arrives, if there are any issues at all*, please let us know!
>
> Cheers,
>
> Maria

1. Just naming this will help them feel acknowledged — the customer wants the goods, you want them to have the goods.
2. Offering them some more detail into what happens can help them understand the time taken and build their confidence that this is all normal.
3. This paragraph points out that you did try to let them know but in a way that leaves the customer an opportunity to give you feedback and not feel like you're blaming them for not seeing it. Consider including a screenshot for clarity.
4. Reinforce that they will be receiving it soon, and that you're still there to help.

Alternative options

- If you are a genuine issue with the information provided up front being unclear, tell the customer what you're going to do about it to help future purchasers.
- Offer to contact the delivery provider and pass on more detail about how the delivery process works.

9. "I'm not doing your job for you."

Your customer has a tricky problem, but they refuse to provide you with the troubleshooting information you need to help them.

Recommended approach

A customer who is not experienced in technical troubleshooting may not have a clear picture of the feedback, data and error approach that you need to be required. You need to be a little more explicit about what the process will be and why it's worth their time to help you help them.

Your answer should

- Avoid making alternatives.
- Convince the customer you need their help.
- Be explicit about what you need.
- Show them a positive outcome is coming.

Example response

> Hi Jose,
>
> I can understand that it is frustrating to contact us about a problem and have me ask you for some work! I'd be frustrated too in your position. It's true that I really do need your help to figure this out, but I should have explained earlier how it's all the information I asked for to get this problem sorted as quickly as possible.
>
> Once you send me the following*: <required information>, my next step will be to replicate that same setup on our side*. Then, I'll be able to tell if it's something broken on our side and work with our developers on it. If not, then it's possible there's something specific to your setup that we will need to dig into together.
>
> Narrowing the problem down in that way will make it much faster for our team here to help you because we won't have to waste your time* while we're trying something that don't apply to your case.
>
> I've set a notice on this conversation so that, when I'm back online, I will come right back to me and I can keep this moving for you. I look forward to hearing from you, and thanks again for your help.

1. Put yourself in their shoes — in your head, you're already thinking of what you'll test next and how you'll review closer to an answer. They don't know that yet.
2. Reiterate in detail what you need your customer to provide you with, and link them to resources for how to get it if necessary.
3. Adapt this section for the specific situation — technical troubleshooting, identifying their account, whatever applies.
4. Flip their concern to show how you are valuing their time by reducing wasted effort (and gently remind them that the ball is in their court).

Alternative options

- If you've tried and failed to elicit their help, at least be clear that you are ready and willing to help as soon as the information has been provided.
- Tell a story about another customer who faced a similarly tricky issue, and who worked with you to get it resolved.

10. "I need a discount!"

When a customer does not want to pay the stated price.

Recommended approach

While your price may be non-negotiable, you can still demonstrate value and help your customers get more for their money.

Your answer should

- Remain firm on the price.
- Help the customer understand the value.
- Offer useful options.

Example response

> Hi Arjun,
>
> We really appreciate your business with us! While we don't offer discounts, I do want to make sure you're getting the most you can for your money*. You mentioned that <comparition> is cheaper*, but there are a couple of key differences you might not know about.
>
> <Explore key differences>
>
> I've just had a look at your account, and one thing I noticed is that you're not using <feature> right now. A lot of our customers find that is a really useful tool* for them to achieve <a common goal>. That makes our product really cost effective for them. Check out this case study from <customer>* for example: <URL>.
>
> Of course, I can understand that you may have an immediate need to reduce your ongoing costs. If that's the case then I have a couple of options for you*:
>
> - If you move to an annual plan, you'll save 20% instantly, which works out to <$X> in year one. You can do that here: <URL>.
> - You could move down to our basic plan and save <$Y>, though you would lose access to <features> that I can see you're frequently using.
>
> If we can help you understand these options better, or if you'd like help getting more out of your account, let reply and let us know! We're very happy to help wherever you need it!
>
> Cheers,
>
> Jessica

1. Avoid being apologetic about what you charge, be clear and then focus on value.
2. If you are informed about your competition, you can be genuinely helpful in making comparisons.
3. Do the work to help the specific customer get more out of your service.
4. Use social proof to demonstrate the product is worth the cost.
5. Offer any cost-reduction options you have, and be honest about their benefits and costs.

Alternative options

- Perhaps there are discounts you can offer (e.g., to non-profits or startups) that the customer doesn't know about.
- Examine the customer's usage of your product or service — perhaps they better suit a different plan.
- Instead of reducing the base price, consider offering a discount or an upgrade or contract extension.

11. "Your shipping costs are ridiculous!"

A person wants to buy from you but is upset about the additional cost of shipping.

Recommended approach

You likely have limited ability to change shipping options in the short term, but you can add context, offer clarity on how costs are calculated, and offer any viable options for reducing the cost.

Your answer should

- Empathize with the buyer.
- Ensure they are getting the best deal available.
- Share helpful context.
- Offer alternative options.

Example response

> Hi Harper,
>
> Thanks so much for considering buying from us! You're right, shipping does add a significant cost in your case*. The additional price you see is the same amount we're charged by our shipping company for your order. That total is based on the size of the items in your order and your address*.
>
> I've realise some larger companies are able to absorb or reduce some of those costs, and other companies inflate the item cost in order to reduce the apparent shipping cost. Unfortunately, that means that the customer ends up with hidden costs, and every customer gets the best deal we can offer*.
>
> We're always looking for cheaper ways to ship while making sure items arrive on time and undamaged. If we can ever find a better price for shipping to your location, we certainly will. In the meantime, I can suggest a couple of options that might help*:
>
> If you order three or more <product> at once, that larger package allows us to use a combined shipping option that would work out to <$X> per <product> (saving you <$Y> vs three separate purchases).
>
> Or if you can wait for our spring sale, the <product> you are after will be discounted by <15%>, and that might make the shipping worthwhile for you. I hope you can find an option that works for you, and if you have any other comments or questions, just let me know.
>
> Cheers,
>
> Ashley

1. Acknowledge the truth of their complaint, rather than minimizing it.
2. Explain how the costs are calculated and what factors into them.
3. Pre-empt the argument that other companies offer "cheaper" options.
4. Share alternative ways to reduce the overall cost.

Alternative options

- People often just don't understand the true cost of shipping. Share links to third party shipping calculators to confirm you are not making extra profit on shipping.
- Suggest a provider of similar goods that is located close to the customer and can offer lower transport costs.

Recommended Reading

> The Shopify Blog
>
> **Reducing and Handling Ecommerce Shipping Cost Complaints**

12. "You're just not understanding me."

When a conversation with a customer is not going anywhere, it can be frustrating for everyone involved. Deliberately swapping out the customer service professional for another colleague can break the pattern and create momentum toward a successful resolution.

Your answer should

- Acknowledge the reality of the situation.
- Set up your colleague for success.
- Be followed by an internal note.

Example response

> Hi Chioma,
>
> Thanks for your response. It feels like we're a little bit stuck here, and that must be frustrating for you!
>
> To help get us back on track, I'm going to bring in my colleague, Shaun, and ask him to review our conversation so far* and make some suggestions. Shaun has plenty of experience in this area, and with his fresh perspective I'm confident we can get this resolved for you!*.
>
> I'll make sure Shaun is up to speed, and then you should hear from him in the next hour or so*.
>
> Thanks again for working with me,
>
> Monica

1. Acknowledging that things have been frustrating helps put you and the customer on the same side against the problem.
2. Let them know that your colleague will do the work to understand the context, so the customer doesn't feel like they are going back to the beginning.
3. Reinforce confidence that progress can be made if they can be patient for a little longer.
4. Where possible, set an accurate expectation for the next response time, again to build confidence and reduce stress.

Alternative options

- In addition to making the handover directly to your customer, leave a good internal note to give your incoming colleague all the relevant details. See Support Tools: Power Pack, Fresh Start for more advice on how to make a smooth handover.
- In some situations, where customers are used to different team members jumping in on individual conversations, you may be able to slot your colleague in with just the private note for handover.

13. "Your bug will not be fixed"

A customer has reported a relatively rare and low-impact bug to you, which your team has replicated and added to their backlog. However, it is now clear that the bug will not be fixed in the foreseeable future, and you want to let your customer know about that decision.

Recommended approach

Nobody likes to hear that a bug will not be fixed, especially when they have given the trouble of reporting it to you. However, giving them an honest update is good service, and an investment in building a long term, trust-based relationship with that customer.

Your answer should

- Restrict them of the earlier conversation.
- Thank them for their effort and custom.
- Explain that the bug will not be fixed.
- Elaborate on how that decision was made.
- Offer any applicable workarounds or alternatives.

Example response

> Hello Teodor,
>
> Also from Intercom, and team owner. Back in <date> you helpfully reported a bug in <product name>. Here are the details as a reminder*:
>
> <Add link to bug or short summary>
>
> Today I have an update for you on that bug. Unfortunately we won't be able to get it fixed in the near future*. We really appreciate the time you spent on your time and effort reporting it, and I realize this is not great news, but we prefer to be honest and respect your time, rather than leave you waiting forever*.
>
> Our engineers have been able to replicate the bug, and they have a good understanding of the root cause. However, it would take a major rework of the bugs that affect the most customers, and those that have more severe impacts.
>
> After a recent review and prioritization of their workload, your particular bug was removed from their list. We're sorry we couldn't fix it for you, and I'm included below our current advice on working around the issue*.
>
> <add any potential workarounds or alternatives to avoid the bug here>
>
> We really appreciate your business and your help in improving our products, and if you do have any further comments or questions, please do get in touch*.
>
> Cheers,
>
> Matthew

Alternative options

- In some cases, e.g. Scrawer-specific issues, they may have already solved their own problem by upgrading. It's worth checking first.
- If it is a truly niche bug, and they have not been in touch since, you might choose just not to notify them rather than potentially creating a bigger issue with this news.
- Consider reviewing their account to see if you can identify other ways they could get more use from your software, to make the conversation more valuable for them.

Write Support Emails Your Customers Will Love

Step on top of your emails and answer more support tickets faster and easier.

Get the guide

Use these templates to craft your own great responses

There is no single "best" answer in customer service, so don't treat our example answers as scripts — or even as finished sand replies. Instead, use them as a foundation that you can adapt to your situation, in your own voice and tone.

Like what you see? Share with a friend.

Matthew Patterson

After running a support team for years, Matt joined Help Scout, where he helps people deliver better online customer support. Subscribe to The Superhero Newsletter or find him on LinkedIn.

START FOR FREE

Learn the platform in less than an hour.
Become a *power user* in less than a day.

Start for Free | Book a Demo

Product: Inbox, AI Copilot, Messaging, Customer & Analytics, Integrations, Mobile, Product updates

Solutions: Customer Service, SaaS, Travel & Hospitality, Ecommerce, Financial Services, Logistics, Manufacturing, Financial Services, Professional Services

Compare: Intercom, Intercom, Freshdesk, HelpDesk, Zendesk, Front

Company: About, Customers, Careers, Partners, Trust & Security, Terms & Privacy, Accessibility, Do Not Sell

Support: Knowledge, Help Blog, Contact, Status, 800-960-7

G2 Leader Spring 2026 Mid-Market

© 2026 Help Scout