



DINUBA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



CUSTOMER SERVICE HANDBOOK

Dinuba Unified School District

Customer Service the “Dinuba Way”

~ Customer Service Mission Statement ~

All Dinuba Unified employees will provide courteous, professional, and efficient service while engaging in productive interactions with staff, students, parents, and community.

Please use this customer service guide as a foundation for providing quality customer service to our parents, students, staff and community. By following the suggestions in this guide, you will contribute to excellence within your school or department as a representative of Dinuba Unified School District (DUSD).

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Best Practices: Tips for Excellent Customer Service

As a DUSD Employee, you help set the tone for your school and/or department. As DUSD employees, we are to be knowledgeable, supportive, encouraging, empathetic and responsible for the atmosphere within our schools and/or departments. We are front line responders for our parents, staff, students, and community. They look to us for answers and to be:

- Knowledgeable: Being knowledgeable about the school, department, staff, events, etc. will enhance our ability to provide exceptional service.
 - If we do not know an answer to a question, ask someone who does so you will know for next time. Tell the customer, “I do not have that answer, but I will find someone who does. If you need to disconnect the call to get the answer tell the customer, “I will get back to you within _____ time. Be sure to collect their name, call back number, and email address so you can follow up. OR, if you cannot answer the question and need to transfer them say, “Let me get you connected with someone who can answer that question. I am going to transfer you, if for some reason the transfer does not go through you can reach them directly at _____.”
 - To be a knowledgeable employee, find out the answers you do not know so you are prepared next time. Cross training within your site or department is a good way of increasing your knowledge base and allows you to help a greater number of people
- Supportive: Parents and Guardians may be trying to figure out how everything works for their students (tardies, grades, COVID schedules, needing to speak with administrators). We need to understand that parents/guardians may not know how things work within the district.
- Encouraging: We want to encourage parents and guardians to feel comfortable asking for assistance. They should be encouraged to reach out to us for correct answers.
- Empathetic: Practice empathy and patience. We cannot always know what each parent/guardian is going through on the other end of the phone. We can only be responsible for our actions, and try to help make their situation better.

Every Caller: A Valued Customer

When answering the telephone please remember these three things:

- Treat the customer with respect and courtesy.
- Strive to understand by listening and address the purpose of the customer's call.
- We are representatives of Dinuba Unified School District, leave the customer with a positive image of your site.

Remember, to callers, **YOU** are Dinuba Unified School District!

Who are the customers?

- Parents
- Students
- Vendors
- Outside Agencies
- Other DUSD employees

Often people think of “customers” only as patrons who are paying for a service. In reality, our customer is the community and anyone who relies on us for service.



Telephone Courtesy

SMILE! First impressions are powerful; there is no second chance. Callers will form a positive or negative impression of you and your school or office in less than 10 seconds.

Treat the caller with the same courtesy and respect with which you wish to be treated.

Your attitude is communicated:

- By your voice
- By your tone
- By your pitch
- When you are helpful
- When you are courteous
- When you give the caller 100% of your attention
- When you use **positive**, proactive communication



A good last impression is as important as a good first impression. End your conversation on a positive note. Let callers know that you are glad they called and are looking forward to hearing from them again.

If the call is going on, ask to put them on hold. Do a 10-second breather and go back on with a fresh smile.

- Establish a schedule that will ensure that someone is available to answer calls if there is a need to leave the desk.

Speak clearly and courteously. Smile as you're speaking to the caller. (This works! The caller will "hear" your smile through the conversation).

- Speak at a normal pace (not too fast or too slow).
- Use proper grammar and avoid slang and endearing terms such as "honey," "or" sweetie."
- Avoid chewing gum or eating while speaking on the telephone.
- Provide training to substitutes, students, and new employees if you assign them to answer our telephones.
- If a caller asks a question, take the time to give him or her clear answer or

Telephone Courtesy, cont.

response.

- The more knowledge you have, the better you are able to assist callers and not have to transfer them unnecessarily.

Remember to:

- End with a smile.
- Reassure your caller.
- Reiterate name and telephone number.



Answering Phone Calls

- Establish a schedule that will ensure that someone is available to answer calls if there is a need to leave the desk.
- Avoid chewing gum or eating while speaking on the telephone.
- If the call is going on and on with no resolution, take a break, ask to put them on hold. Take a 10-second breather and return to the call with a fresh smile.
- During the call, use the caller's name to add a sense of connection.
- Promptly respond to voicemails/messages. Each staff member will return calls and emails within one to two business days. If a response cannot be provided in the allotted time, the caller will be notified and given an estimated time of response.

Promptness Counts	Whenever possible, telephone lines should be answered by the third ring.
Greeting	Be sure to answer the telephone with a smile.
School or Department school	Keep it simple! The name of your office or school should be descriptive, yet brief.
Your Name	State your name so the caller may reach you if disconnected or if the caller needs additional information.
Offer Assistance	Offer a greeting, your name and your assistance. Example: "Good morning, Classified Development this is Rebecca, how may I help you?"
Ending the Call	End the call on a positive note, such as "Thank you for your call," or "Have a great day."



Placing a Caller on Hold

- If you need to place a caller on hold, **be sure to first ask** if he/she AGREES to hold. Allow the caller to answer before you push the hold button. If the caller does not want to be placed on hold give them the option to leave a message.
- Examples of asking to be placed on hold:
 - "May I place you on a brief hold?"
 - "May I ask who's calling?" (Check if the person that they are calling for is available.)
- Tell the caller why they need to be placed on hold.
 - "May I place you on hold while I check for you" – i.e., if the caller asks if a certain person is in.
- Make sure the caller knows you have not forgotten about them: 30 seconds-1minute - get back on the line and give them an update. If it's going to take you more than 2 minutes to get an answer, ask them if you can take a message and return their call.
- If you are asked to screen calls for someone else, use the phrase, "May I ask who's calling?" "What is the call regarding?" May I place you on a brief hold- I will verify if "NAME" is available.
- When picking up a call from a hold or a transfer, thank the caller for holding.
 - "Thank you for holding... (continue with your greeting)"
- End the call with: Thank for your patience, have a great day"



Referring a Caller to a Different Location

If a caller has reached the wrong office, make every effort to re-direct the caller to the appropriate location. When referring the caller to another school or department:

- Provide the caller with the telephone number and/or extension
- If possible, offer to transfer the call
- Remain on the line during the transfer so that you can inform the other party of the needs of your caller
- When referring your caller to another location make every effort to do so in a timely manner

When the caller is requesting information that you can readily obtain from another office or person, make every effort to do so and save the caller the time and frustration of making several calls.

The caller will long remember and appreciate the outstanding act of customer service!



Taking Messages

- If a caller is trying to reach an employee who is unavailable, offer the caller one of these three options:
 - To speak with someone else who can assist
 - To hold
 - To leave a message

- Whenever possible, give the caller complete contact information. Include: Name, phone number with extension and email address. Include available hours if known.

- If the person being called will be absent for an extended period of time, it may be best to refer the caller to someone else. For example:

"Peter is at a meeting this afternoon and will return to the office in the morning. May I take a message for you?", Or

"Tom is out of the office and will return on the 23rd. May I refer you to someone else who may assist you?"

- **Refrain** from using the statements below when an employee is unavailable. Instead, use a more professional phrase such as "is away from her desk," or "away from the office at this time," or "is working remotely."

"Out on COVID leave"

"Is in the restroom"

"Out to lunch"

"Went home early"

"At the doctor's office"

"On break"

"Has not come in yet"

"Out sick"

- Some administrators prefer their messages be sent to them electronically. Discuss this option with your supervisor or administrator before using.

- If you use a message pad, we recommend one with the capacity to make a duplicate copy.

- All messages should include the following information:
 - The name of the message recipient (first and last name)
 - The name of the caller or visitor (first and last name)
 - Location or place of business of the caller or visitor
 - The date
 - The time
 - The actual message
 - Indicate any other specifics (e.g. call back, returning your call, was in to see you, will call again, urgent please call immediately, etc.)
- Sign your name on the message.

Responses will be timely. Each staff member will return calls and emails within one to two business days. If a response cannot be provided in the allotted time, the caller will be notified and given an estimated time of response.

- If taking a second message, take the telephone number again and label the message #2.
- Print or write legibly.
- Verify the spelling of the caller's first and last name and the telephone number to ensure accuracy.
- If the person leaves more than one telephone number, be sure to write on the message the times when the person can be reached at those numbers.



Responding to an Upset Customer



- Allow the caller time to fully explain the reason they are calling and why they are upset.
- If the caller is using profanity or verbally attacking or threatening you, be calm but firm and explain that you want to assist with the problem, but they must refrain from using profanity.
- Restate to the caller your understanding of the caller's concerns in your own words to ensure you understand why they are upset. For example, after the caller has expressed his or her position, you might say, "I understand that this is very upsetting. What I hear you saying is.....Is that accurate?"
- Once the caller says "yes" or agrees that you understand the problem, offer your assistance (either by resolving the concerns or connecting the caller to someone who can resolve the concern). If practical, stay on the line with the caller until you are sure the concern is being addressed by someone who can resolve it.
- Agree on a plan of action (do not agree to do something or promise to do something you cannot deliver).
- If you must refer the caller to someone else, provide the person receiving the call with the background information you received from the caller.
- If for some reason your call is disconnected, let me give you the direct line and their name in another way.
- Be sure to follow up as soon as possible.

Using Voicemail

Setting Up Your Voicemail

- Identify yourself and your school or office; keep it short and simple.
- When recording your greeting, speak clearly and slowly.
 - For example: "Hello, you have reached (your name) with (your school or office). I am not available at this time. Please leave your name and number. For immediate assistance, you may call (name) at (number). Thank you." Please add a sample message for working remote...
- Check messages frequently and return calls promptly.
- When using voicemail with several options, make sure that all the options you provide are valid.
- Always give the caller the option to speak to a live person.

Leaving a Voice Mail Message

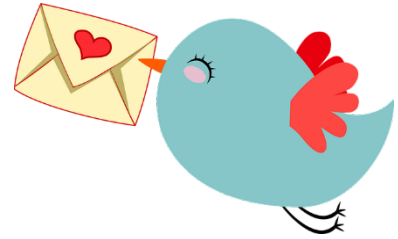
- When leaving a voicemail message, speak clearly and slowly.
- Identify yourself and your school office.
- State what the call is regarding.
- Always leave your telephone number and the time when you can be reached.
 - For example: "This is (your name) from (your school or office). Please call me at (your number) regarding (your concern). I can be reached (indicate when by leaving best time to reach you). Thank you"
 - There is no harm in stating your name and phone number twice, and this can be a big help to those who are trying to write down the information.



Best Practices for Supervisors

- Keep your staff well informed. Each school and department should develop a procedure to ensure that those assigned to answer the telephone are properly informed when other staff members are unavailable to receive calls.
- Communication with staff assigned to answer the telephone needs to be ongoing. Staff that are assigned to answer the telephone should be informed when you are expecting an important call, unable to take calls, or when you will be in meetings.
- Specific whereabouts and return times of staff should be clearly communicated to those assigned to answer the telephone so that they are equipped with accurate information to offer excellent customer service.

Email Etiquette



Email is a widely used and highly effective form of business communication. Due to the sheer volume of messages we are reading and writing, we may be more prone to making embarrassing errors, and those mistakes can have unintended consequences. Following these tips may help you avoid those errors.

- **Nothing is Confidential** - so write accordingly
 - Golden Rule of Email – Would you want to see this in the newspaper or on social media? If not, do not put it in an email. Sometimes a phone call is a better option.
 - A basic guideline is to assume that others will see what you wrote.
 - Don't write anything that would be harmful to you or hurtful to others.
 - Do not reply when you are angry or upset.
 - Remember, you lose tone, inflection of speech, and body language when using written communication. If you are concerned about how your email might be interpreted, have someone else proof it for you.
- Include a clear, direct subject line. People often decide whether to open an email based on what is in the subject line. Examples of subject lines:
 - Dinuba Unified in the News - FYI
 - Decision Needed - Please Reply
 - Contract Attached - For your Records
 - For Action – Deadline of January 1, 2050
 - School Site Council - Meeting Date Change
 - Question about your presentation
 - Parent Concern – Please Follow Up
- Keep your fonts, colors, and sizes classic.
 - Your emails should be easy for others to read.
 - Generally, it is best to use 10 or 12-point type and an easy to read font such as Arial, Calibri, or Time New Roman.
 - Black is the safest color choice.
- Use a professional greeting
 - Each greeting should show respect for others and use titles, if necessary.
 - Each situation will need to be evaluated on its own.
- Keep it brief.

Email Etiquette, cont.

- Be concise. Try to keep your email to about 25 lines or less.
- Do not type in all CAPS. That is considered yelling or reflects a shouting emphasis.
- If you bold your type, know that you are bolding your statement and it will be taken that way by the other party. A good example of items to bold, would be a deadline or meeting date within the body of your email. This will assist the reader in finding the important dates.
- Think twice before hitting “reply all”.
 - No one wants to read a string of emails from 20 people that do not add anything relevant to the conversation. Do not “reply all” to say “Thank you”.
 - Refrain from hitting “reply all” unless you really think everyone on the list needs to receive your response.
 - As a writer, you can restrict your audience from being able to “reply all” by adding the audience members email to the BCC line. They will not be able to reply to anyone else that is in the BCC line. They will be able to reply to anyone that is listed in the TO or CC section.
- Think about your reasons for adding addresses TO, CC, BCC.
- Always end your emails with a closure such as “Thank you,” “Sincerely,” “Best regards” much as you would in a standard business letter. This can also be included in your signature line.
- Utilize the Dinuba Unified template for your email signature line. Include the following information:
 - Your first and last name
 - Job Title
 - School or Department
 - Your office phone number
 - Your school or Department Website Link
 - Other important links that are specific for your department or school site
- Use discretion when forwarding emails.



Using an Out of Office Message

Employees who will be out of the office for two or more days should create an "Out of Office" message. Include the following information in your out of office responses:

- The dates of your absence.
- The date you will return to the office
- Whether or not you will be checking emails while out of the office.
- An estimated time when you will be able to respond to messages.
- An emergency contact name.

Example A:

I will be out of the office starting (Starting Date) through (End Date) returning (Date of Return). During this period, I will have limited access to my email.

If you need immediate assistance during my absence, please contact (Contact's Name) at (Contact's Email Address). Otherwise I will respond to your emails as soon as possible upon my return.

Warm Regards,
[Your Name]

Example B:

Hello,

You've reached Stacey Smith in the HR Department. I am currently out of the office from December 7th to December 11th. I will not have access to email during this time.

If you need immediate assistance, please call my HR team at 559-591-0000. Otherwise, please leave a message. Please clearly state your name and phone number and I will return your call on December 14th.

Thank you.

Face-to-Face Service (Post COVID)

All customers will be treated with dignity and respect

We will accomplish that by:

- Creating an environment that is inviting and family-friendly in all district facilities.
- Acknowledging and greeting customers, parents, and students with “Good morning” or “Good afternoon” in a friendly manner, even if they are not specifically here to see you.
- Communicating in a friendly and professional manner even if we’ve had a tough day or they are having a tough day.
- Being courteous and helpful during customer interactions no matter how we are feeling.
- Assuming the responsibility of assisting the customer or directing the customer to the appropriate person, i.e. making phone calls to obtain the appropriate person who can help the customer if you cannot.
- Ensuring that the information provided to customers is accurate and consistent, even if it requires a follow up contact.
- Always greeting customers with a genuine smile and friendly attitude.
- Watching our body language, our facial expressions, and the tone of our voice as we greet customers.
- Making eye contact as we speak to and assist customers.
- Being patient and adaptable – making customers feel more comfortable, i.e. speaking to them in their native language if possible.
- Having the ability to read customers as they arrive, watching and listening for subtle clues as to the customer’s current mood, patience level, personality, language, etc., which goes a long way in keeping customer interactions positive.
- Keeping a calm and understanding manner – relating to their problem to help solve their dilemma or situation.
- Putting our food/drink aside to assist a customer in a professional manner. Also, avoid chewing gum or sucking on candy during customer interaction.



Dinuba Unified School District



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For additional information, contact the Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Learning Department at (559) 595-7325 or visit us at:

<https://www.dinuba.k12.ca.us/curriculum>

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