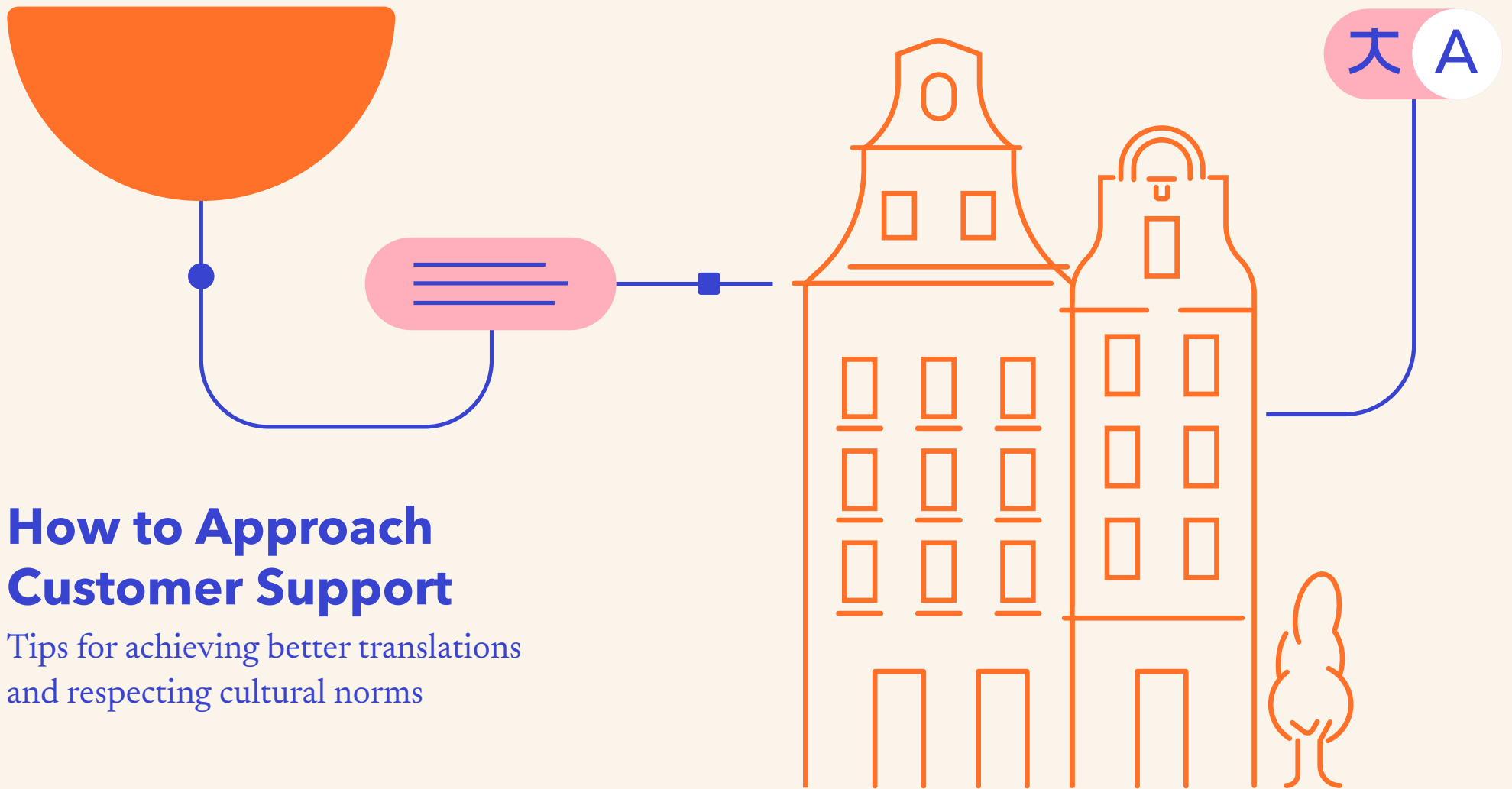


# NORDIC / SCANDINAVIAN



## How to Approach Customer Support

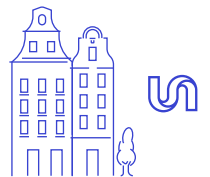
Tips for achieving better translations  
and respecting cultural norms

# Introduction

Global businesses today serve a diverse set of customers who speak different languages, come from different countries and regions, and have different cultural contexts.

Every one of the more than 6,900 distinct languages spoken around the world is unique, and cultural nuances can vary widely. It's important to understand these factors when providing customer service. Communicating in the customer's native language and behaving in culturally appropriate ways help develop and nurture trust. This is why any customer-centric business should strive to build cross-cultural competency into their customer service organization.

To help you achieve this, Unbabel has put together a series of language guides. Our goal is to provide helpful and illuminating context in an easy-to-digest format. In this guide, we'll cover four Nordic languages: Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish.



# About the Nordic languages

The countries in Northern Europe – Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, among others – comprise the Nordics or Scandinavian region.

The Nordic languages fall under two categories: North Germanic and Finno-Ugric. Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish belong to the former, while the latter includes only Finnish.

This is why even though these countries have much in common in terms of culture, heritage, and history – owing to the Vikings – Finnish is remarkably diverse from Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. Approximately a total of 25 million people speak these four languages.



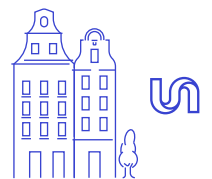
HEJ



HEI



HALLO



# Core concepts in Nordic culture relevant to customer service

## EGALITARIANISM

Nordic societies are among the most equal in the world. The concept of “I” is not as important as the collective “we.” This means conversations usually go on for as long as it takes to arrive at a consensus that’s favorable to most of the participants, if not all. Conflicts are solved using negotiation and extensive discussion. Nordic countries also prize individualism, and as individuals, they value privacy. They’re reserved and don’t reveal more than the necessary information.

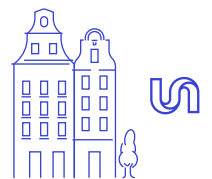
## HONESTY

Scandinavians prefer bluntness over effusiveness, and they prefer to not sugarcoat the truth. Facts sway decisions, not emotions. They expect you to mean what you say and keep your promises. Most Scandinavians have a measured, turn-based conversation style.

Unlike American culture, in which affirmation sounds from the listener are common, Nordic citizens treasure silences. Affirmations are viewed as interruptions, talking over them is perceived as arrogance, and superlative statements and over-the-top promises are considered presumptuous. We recommend simple, straightforward communication.

## LAGOM

The Swedish concept of lagom is centered around moderation and balance. Scandinavians believe in getting not too much or too little of anything. This includes everything from screen time and stress to even their professional life. The concept of lagom also makes them modest and a little risk-averse. They don’t like to overindulge as much as they don’t like to brag.

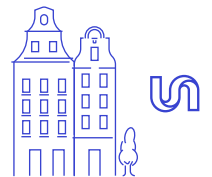


# Best practices for optimizing machine translation output

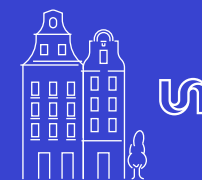
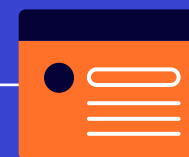
When writing in English with the knowledge that the content will be translated into Nordic languages, there are several best practices to follow.



- 1 Avoid long sentences (over 30 words)
- 2 Avoid idioms or slang
- 3 Keep it simple and straightforward
- 4 Copyedit to avoid typos
- 5 Use active voice to reduce ambiguity
- 6 Avoid abbreviations, including contractions like "you're" and "we'd"
- 7 Be consistent, especially with terms like "email" that can be written multiple ways
- 8 Stick to English grammar rules
- 9 Ensure no spaces are missing
- 10 Use proper punctuation and capitalization
- 11 Finish all sentences (do not use fragments)
- 12 Avoid double subjects (e.g., the noun and a pronoun referencing it)
- 13 Ensure the word order is correct
- 14 Check for subject-verb agreement (person and number in singular/plural) and pronoun agreement (person, gender, and number)
- 15 Format messages correctly (e.g., with no extra line breaks, bullets or asterisks)



# DANISH



# Best practices for communicating with Danish customers

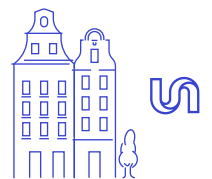
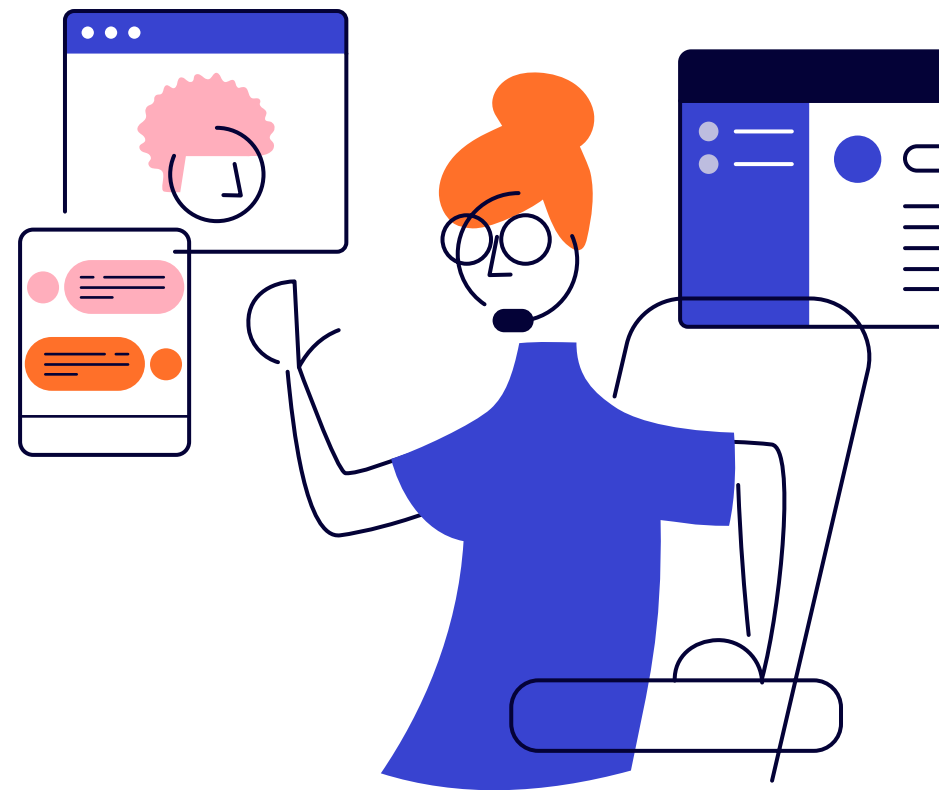
DANISH

## LIMIT PLEASANTRIES AND SMALL TALK

The Danish prefer to get straight to the matter at hand. Plain speaking and directness are appreciated. This means it's crucial for you to brace yourself against bluntness from them as well. They also prefer to be informal. However, it's always better to use the right titles and greetings until they initiate informal communication.

## AVOID CONFRONTATIONS AND CONFLICTS

Mutual respect and decency are critical to building a good relationship with Danes. Their values include treating everyone equally and giving everyone the time they need to express their opinion – this is why consensus and negotiation are prioritized when decisions are made. They expect you to treat them as your equal and reciprocate their decency. They prefer to avoid conflict and confrontation, especially in a professional or customer service interaction; they'll simply walk away from contentious conversations.



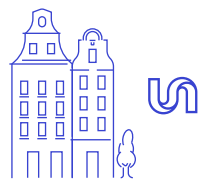
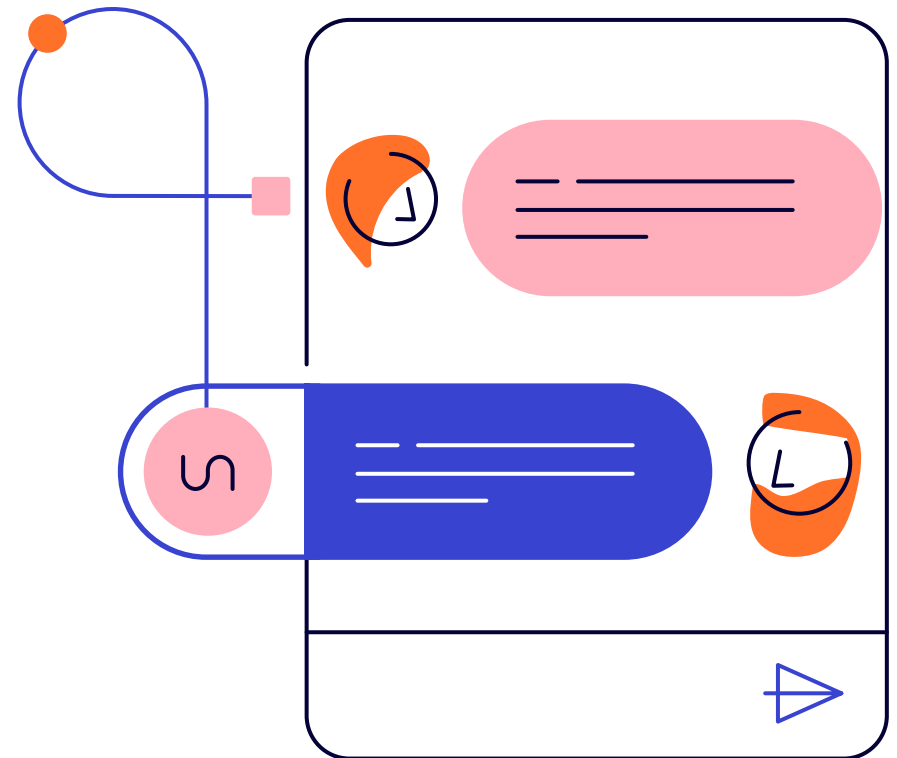
# Best practices for communicating with Danish customers

## BRACE YOURSELF FOR DANISH HUMOR

Humor plays a key role in Danish interactions. But prepare yourself for their peculiar brand of humor: Most Danes are highly sarcastic, and irony is alive and well. Some of their jokes might also come across as too morbid or self-deprecating. All this said, humor is just one way of establishing unpretentiousness, which is crucial in Danish culture. Avoid jokes about evading taxes – it’s a major crime in Denmark.

## AVOID HYPERBOLE AND IMMODESTY

Lofty promises and bragging are against the law of Jante – which is, in actuality, more a cultural code than a rule of law – no one can think they’re better than others. Equality plays a big role in the Danish culture. Denmark might be doing well economically, but Danes still don’t like flaunting their wealth or success. On the contrary, they actively downplay their skills, qualifications, and achievement. Danes don’t care about what you’ve accomplished – and this goes for your company as well. If you have facts, figures, and charts to support your claims, they’re more likely to trust you.





# How to write in English for Danish machine translation

## 1 AVOID LONG SENTENCES

The Danish consider an intimate tone to be disrespectful. Being overly humble will also not leave a favorable impression on your customer.

### GREETINGS

not advised

- Dear John,
- Respected sir/lady

advised

- Dear John Smith,
- Hello,

### CLOSINGS

not advised

- See you!
- Have a great day!

advised

- With kind regards,
- Regards,

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

not advised

- Good morning, Stefannie :)

advised

- Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

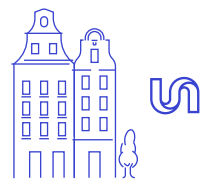
Interjections indicate an informal tone and should be avoided when writing to a Danish audience.

not advised

- Oh, I'm so sorry about that.
- Ah, that's alright.

advised

- I'm sorry about that.
- That's alright.



# How to write in English for Danish machine translation

## 4 SPEAK IN THE FIRST PERSON

When writing in Danish, use the first person to be more polite.

### not advised

- The company will see what can be done about this

### advised

- I will see what I can do about this issue.
- We will see what can be done about this issue.

## 5 DON'T BE TOO DIRECT

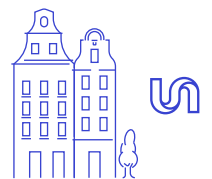
While the Danish like directness, they're not extremely direct. Being too blunt might be perceived as too aggressive. The Danish also value their integrity, so don't question it.

### not advised

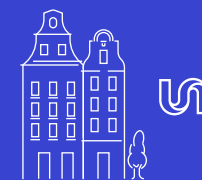
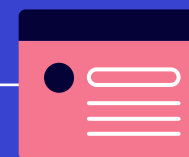
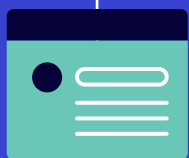
- Was the product already defective or did something happen to it?

### advised

- Could you tell me in what state you found the product?



# FINNISH



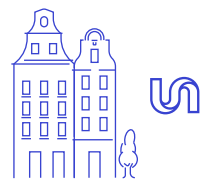
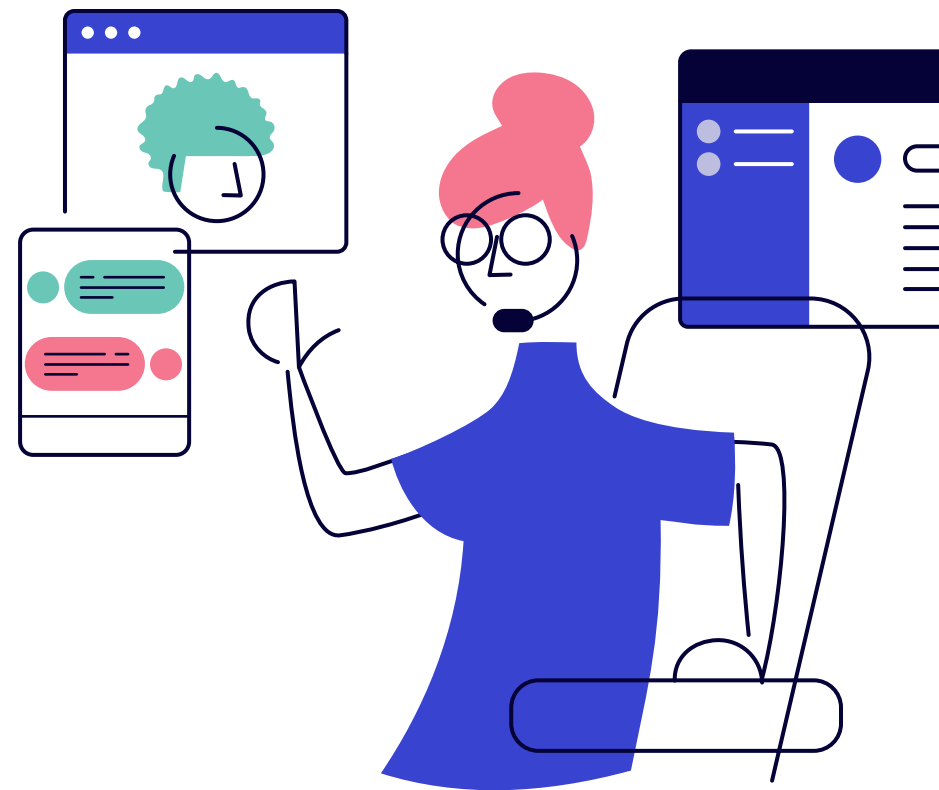
# Best practices for communicating with Finnish customers

## YOUR WORD IS YOUR BOND

Verbal and informal agreements are a big part of Finnish culture, and they'll be taken at face value. When they say something, they're direct, and they expect the same straightforwardness of others. They mean what they say, and they rely on facts and not emotions. Only make promises you can deliver. Punctuality is prized in Finland. If you say something will get done by a certain time, get it done by that time, if not before.

## SILENCE DOES NOT MEAN DISINTEREST

Silences and lulls during conversations are common with Finns. They might also be reserved; especially in customer service interactions, Finns don't say too much unless absolutely necessary. But this doesn't mean that they aren't interested in what you have to say. The silence indicates that they're contemplating the information you've shared. Ultimately, it's important that you don't interrupt, not even when there's a break in the conversation, or finish their sentences for them. Your Finnish customer might view this as rude and turn the other way.



# Best practices for communicating with Finnish customers

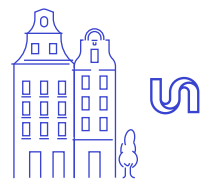
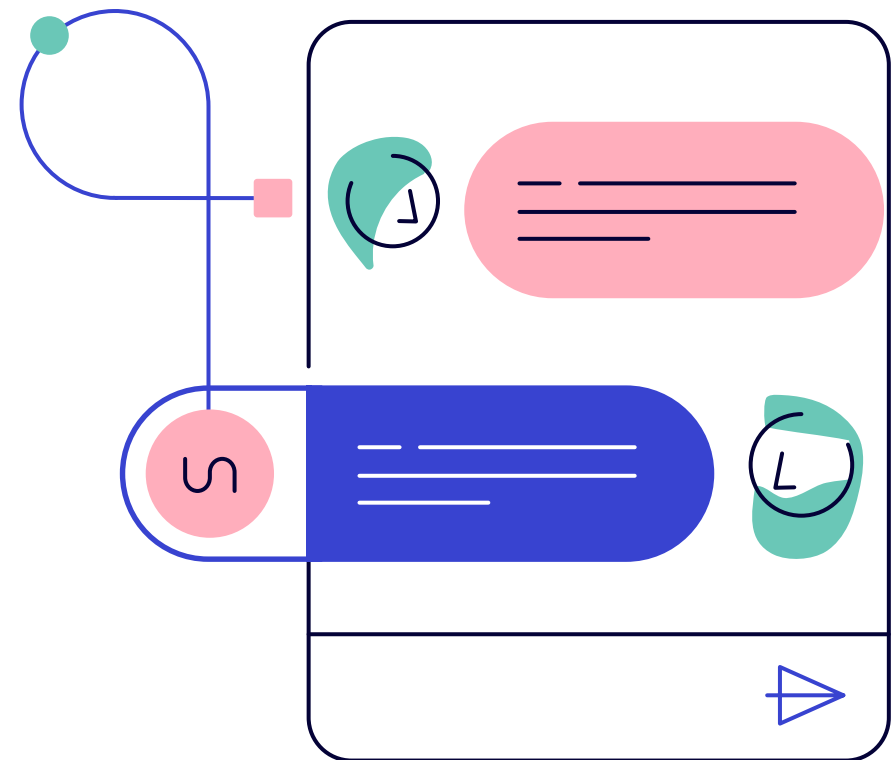
FINNISH

## ADD STRUCTURE TO YOUR CONVERSATION

Finns' emails are concise, and their responses are prompt. They make their point while being polite. And they expect all this in return from you. They don't ask many questions; in fact, they expect you to provide all the information and context so that they're sufficiently informed. Finns also pride themselves on their values and work ethic, and they don't like to waste time. They expect efficiency and effectiveness in conversations.

## MAINTAIN FORMALITY AND AVOID TABOOS

Finns are professional and don't expect you to build interpersonal relationships with them. They're private and transactional – which means they don't require friendship from short-term interactions, business connections (even their colleagues), or customer service. Don't ask them personal questions, complain or criticize, or compare them with Swedes. Your Finnish customer might get offended.



# How to write in English for Finnish machine translation

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS CORRECTLY

**FORMAL** In Finnish, a formal tone is rarely used in customer support. However, it's still used by some companies

### GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Hi/Hey!

#### advised

- Dear customer,
- Hello,
- Hello Jane,

### CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

#### advised

- With kind regards,
- Warm regards,
- Regards,

**INFORMAL** In Finnish, an informal tone is used neutrally. Don't confuse informal with colloquial language because it is not appropriate in written language.

### GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Hi there,

#### advised

- Hey Jane,
- Hello,

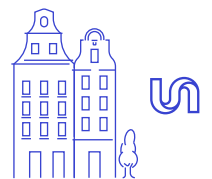
### CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

#### advised

- With kind regards,
- Regards,



# How to write in English for Finnish machine translation

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

---

### not advised

· Good morning, Stefannie :)

### advised

· Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

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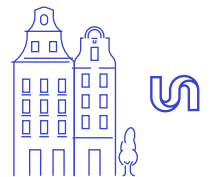
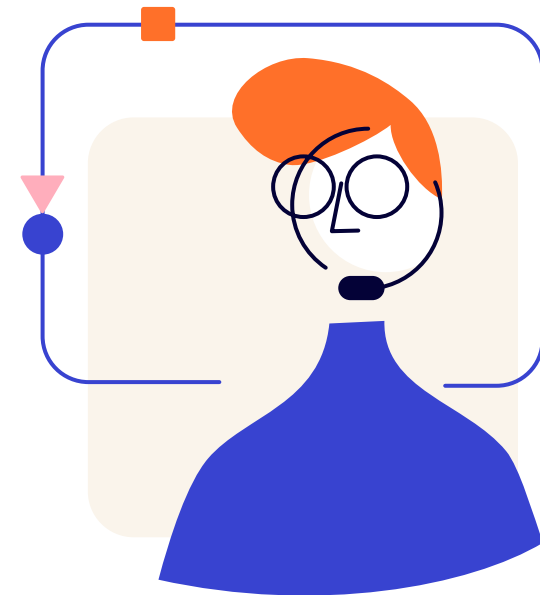
Interjections are another marker for informality and should be avoided when writing to a Finnish audience.

### not advised

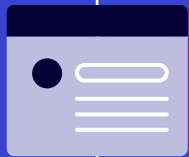
· Oh, I'm so sorry about that.  
· Ah, that's alright.

### advised

· I'm sorry about that.  
· That's alright.



# NORWEGIAN



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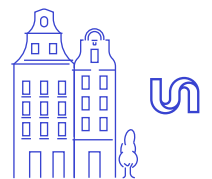
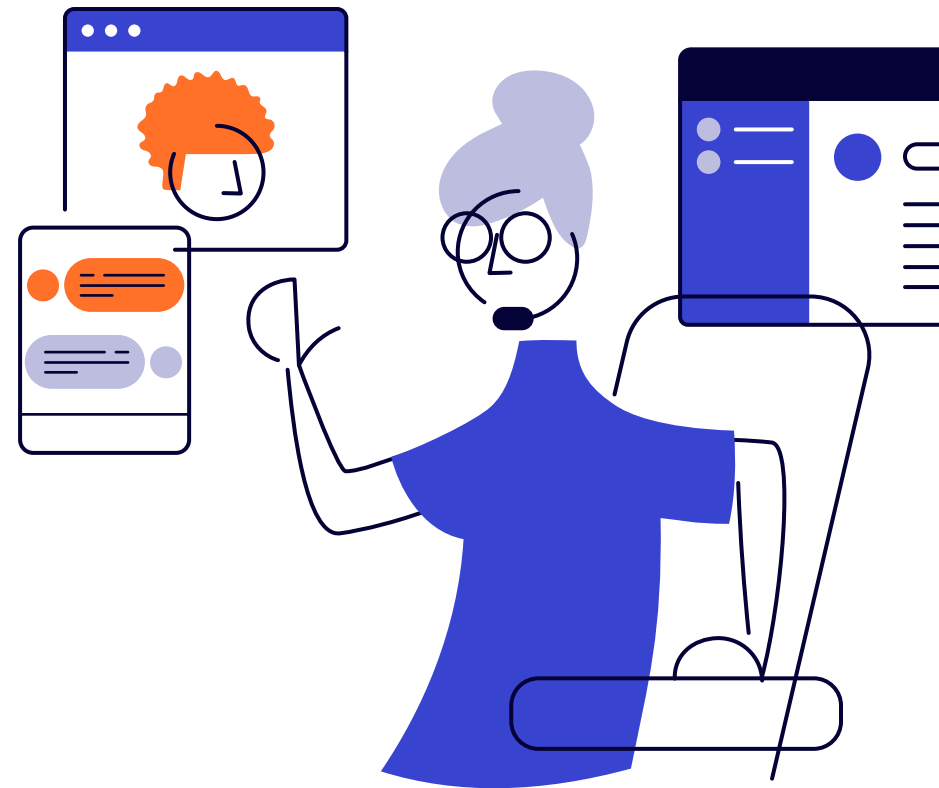
# Best practices to communicate with Norwegian customers

## DON'T GET TOO PERSONAL

Even though Norwegian people commonly introduce themselves with their first name only, that's not to be taken as an invitation to be entirely casual. Norwegians don't make small talk with strangers, and they're not known for displays of excessive emotion. They also see customer service relationships as entirely transactional. Intrusive questions, interruptions, and snap judgments are seen as rude.

## TIMELY COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Professionalism needs to be a priority when communicating with Norwegians. They treasure their time, so punctuality is immensely important to them. Sticking to deadlines and keeping your word are crucial to earn their trust. Conflicts and confrontational approaches will get you nowhere – instead, go in armed with extensive research and preparation, and fact-oriented communication.



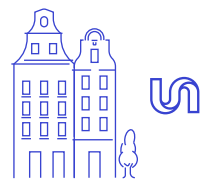
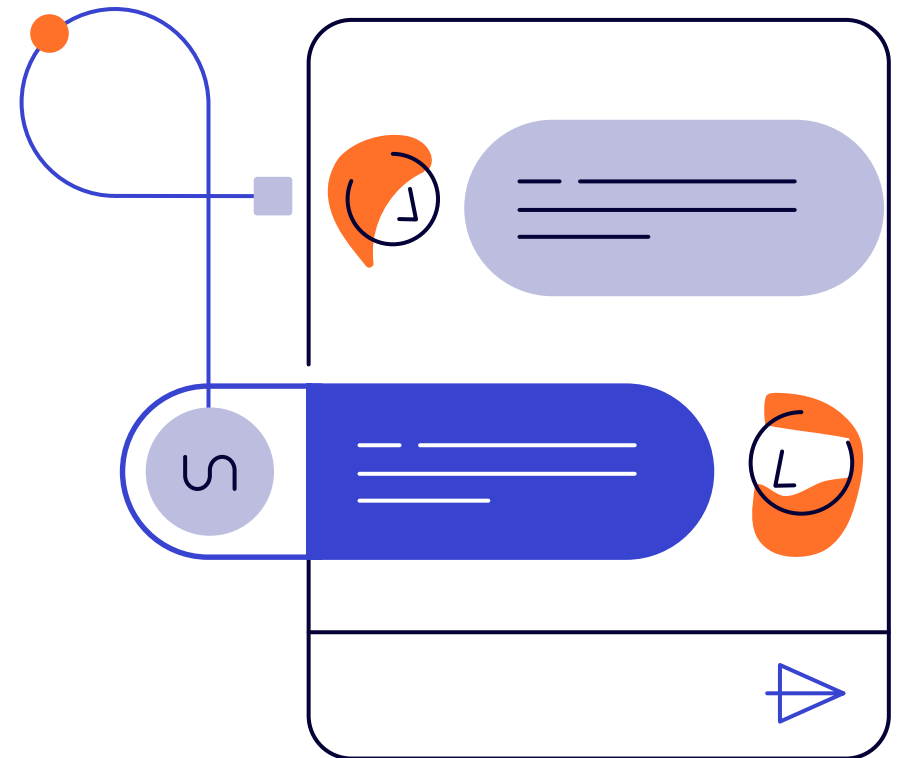
# Best practices to communicate with Norwegian customers

## DISCOUNTS WILL NOT WIN THEM OVER

Discounts are uncommon in Norway, and Norwegians are not impressed by bargains and hard-sell tactics. In fact, such methods will only make them resist even more. Setting realistic expectations and keeping your offering competitive are more likely to sway your customer.

## EQUALITY IS THE NORM

The Jante law – a pillar in the Norwegian culture – prioritizes respect, humility, simplicity, and equality. Norwegians are not vocal about their accomplishments and qualifications, and don't judge others based on their professional standing. Because everyone is seen as equal, using professional titles and honorifics is even considered old-fashioned by many. Make sure to do more research on the customer's background before communicating with them.



# How to write in English for Norwegian machine translation

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS CORRECTLY

**FORMAL** In Norwegian, there are certain rules when the formal tone is used in customer support.

### GREETINGS

not advised

- Hi/Hey!
- Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss,
- Dear Miss Smith,

advised

- Hello,
- Dear Jane Smith,
- Dear customer, (when you only know the client's surname)

### CLOSINGS

not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

advised

- With kind regards,
- Warm regards,
- Regards,

**INFORMAL** When using an informal tone, it is common to use very informal expressions

### GREETINGS

not advised

- Dear Jane Smith,
- Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss,
- Dear Miss Smith,

advised

- Hello Jane Smith,
- Hi Jane,

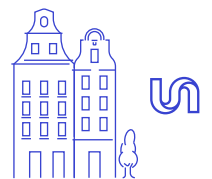
### CLOSINGS

not advised

- Regards,
- Sincerely,

advised

- See you soon,
- Goodbye,



# How to write in English for Norwegian machine translation

## 2 WATCH OUT FOR TONE

While the Norwegian language is very direct, certain expressions in English might seem too direct and impolite.

One example of this is the use of an imperative tone, which feels more like a command rather than a request. When using an imperative tone, use the word “please” to indicate politeness.

Instead, turn it into a question.

### not advised

- Order number, please

### advised

- Could you send me the order number?

However, the Norwegian language is very sensitive to the word “please.” Excessive use of “please” might seem insincere to your Norwegian customer. Make sure to strike the right balance.

## 3 AVOID EMOJIS

### not advised

- Good morning, Stefannie :)

### advised

- Good morning, Stefannie.

## 4 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

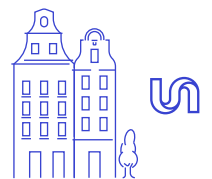
Interjections are another marker for an informal tone of voice and they should be avoided when writing to a Norwegian audience.

### not advised

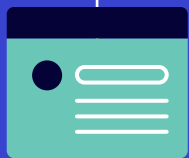
- Oh, I’m so sorry about that.
- Ah, that’s alright.

### advised

- I’m sorry about that.
- That’s alright.



# SWEDISH



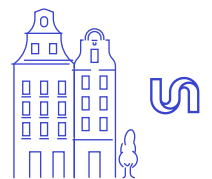
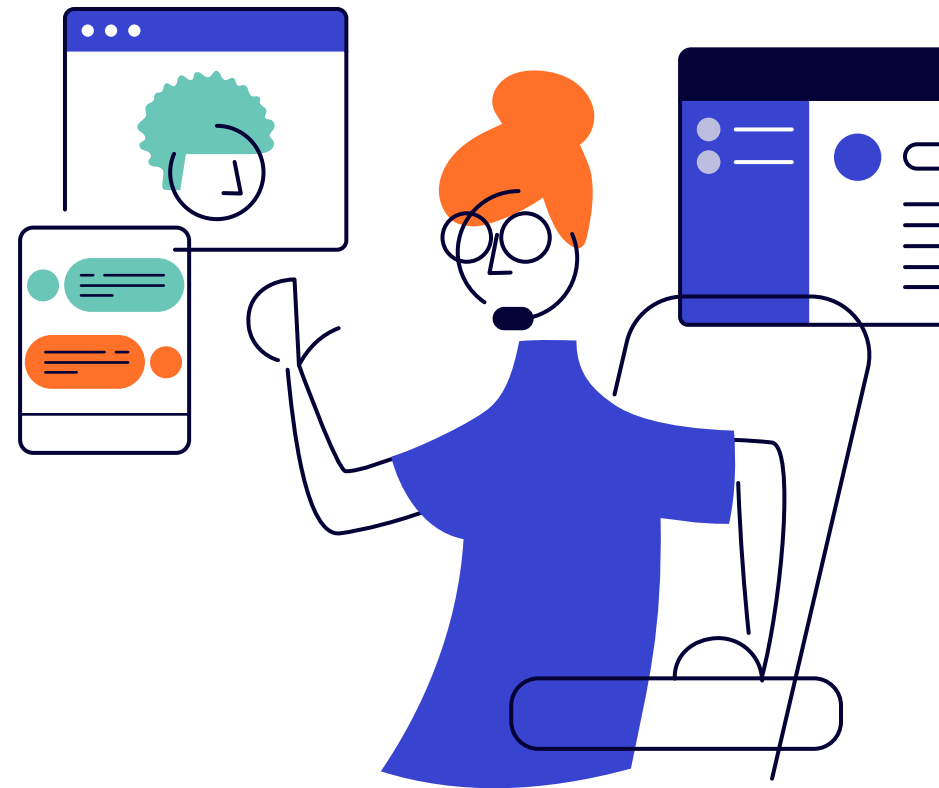
# Best practices to communicate with Swedish customers

## FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER'S ISSUE – AND THE CUSTOMER

In Swedish customer service, the customer rules all. It's important to put your customer's needs first, so instead of rushing to explain about the product, ask questions about the customer's interaction with your product first. Swedes are known for their informality, but don't mistake this as friendship. They're not interested in small talk: They rarely stray outside the agenda, so keep your attention on the task at hand.

## AVOID DISPLAYS OF POWER OR HIERARCHY

Bringing your manager to assert something will not impress your Swedish customer. In fact, it will only earn their disapproval. Don't brag about your product or company, and avoid exaggerations – Swedes appreciate modesty. Instead, support your claims with data, facts, and meticulous preparation.



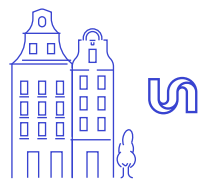
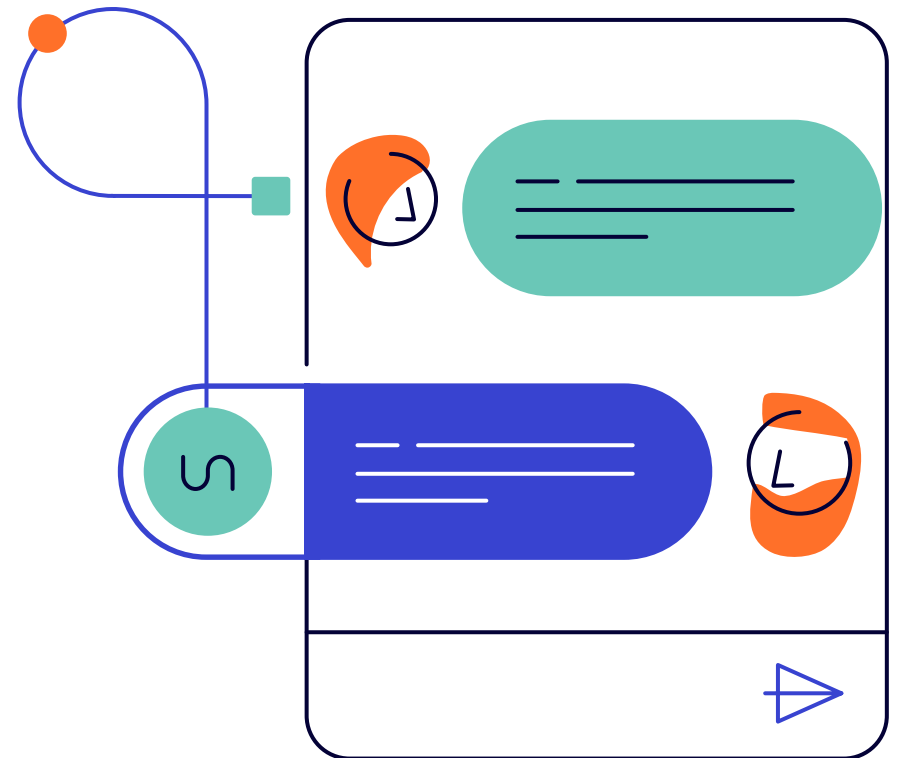
# Best practices to communicate with Swedish customers

## MAKE CLARITY A PRIORITY

Swedish communication is direct and clear, and they expect this from others as well. It's important that you meet this expectation – keep your statements concise, minimal, accurate, and explicit. Swedish culture is highly task-based, and everything, including their communication, is efficient. In fact, they take pride in saying it like it is and leaving no room for ambiguity. Don't confuse this with bluntness or disapproval.

## INNOVATE TO EARN THEIR TRUST

While clear communication is key, Swedes are good with dealing with ambiguity and new points of view; they just expect honesty. Their task-focused style might seem like caution, but they appreciate creative, out-of-the-box but pragmatic solutions. They have a high tolerance for unconventional (but efficient) methods.



# How to write in English for Swedish machine translation

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS CORRECTLY

**FORMAL** In Swedish, the formal tone is rarely used. It usually occurs in scientific contexts or in very formal situations. When using it, stick to a more formal English.

### GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Hi/Hey!
- How are you?
- How was your day today?
- Dear Mr Anders,

#### advised

- Hello John,
- Hello Anders,

### CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

#### advised

- With kind regards,

**BUSINESS INFORMAL** In Swedish customer support, a business informal tone is commonly used.

It's appropriate to use the customer's name only in greetings. Your Swedish customer might find it disrespectful if you use their name anywhere else.

### GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Dear customer,
- Dear Mr Anders,

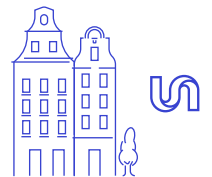
#### advised

- Hi!/Hey!/Hello there!
- Hello John,
- Hello Anders,
- Hello there,

### CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.





# How to write in English for Swedish machine translation

SWEDISH

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

### not advised

- Good morning, Stefannie :)

### advised

- Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

Interjections should be avoided when writing to a Swedish audience because it can be perceived as rude.

### not advised

- Oh, I'm so sorry about that. Ah, that's alright.

### advised

- I'm sorry about that. That's alright.

## 4 FOCUS ON THE CLIENT

In Swedish customer support, the customer is truly the king. Always use the customer as the subject and never yourself.

### not advised

- I need you to send the receipt.

### advised

- Could you send the receipt?

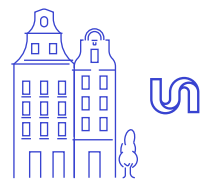
Don't describe your feelings. The focus should always be on the customer.

### not advised

- I'm sorry about the situation.

### advised

- How can I help you?



# How to write in English for Swedish machine translation

## 5 AVOID USING "PLEASE"

There is no direct translation of the word "please" in Swedish. For politeness, instead of using it, try these alternatives.

### advised

- Would you be able to...?
- Would you like to...?
- Can you...?
- That would be good if...?
- Feel free to...?
- If you want...?
- If you can...?

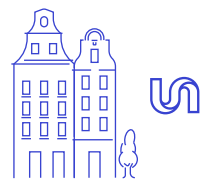
## 6 AVOID NEGATIVE SENTENCES

Don't use the negative form or sentences with negative connotations because it might have a double meaning. Use the positive equivalent as much as possible.

### not advised

- Don't hesitate to...
- Do you have any problems?
- Please do...
- Is there anything I may help you with?

### advised



# The Golden Rules of Customer Service

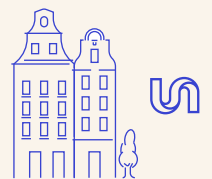


Of course, some best practices do not vary by language and should be applied to every customer service interaction. Here are the nine best practices we recommend.

- 1 EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS.** Always put in the best effort to make each interaction – every single one – a great one.
- 2 READ, DON'T SKIM.** Ensure you do not miss any valuable details or context in the message.
- 3 COMMUNICATE CONCISELY.** Only give the information you need to, helping your customer to find the answers to their questions or queries as fast and as efficiently as possible.
- 4 FOCUS ON GREAT SUPPORT BEFORE FAST SUPPORT.** Speed is important, of course, but it should not take precedence over quality.
- 5 MAKE THINGS EASY.** Always aim to reduce customer effort and take the burden off them when it comes to getting answers or help for their concern.

- 6 BE RESPECTFUL.** Always say “please” and “thank you.” This applies across cultural contexts and demographics. Politeness never goes out of style.
- 7 TAKE A NEUTRAL STANCE ON ISSUES.** There’s no reason to cause friction in a customer service interaction. Don’t take a stance on issues – even ones that seem harmless.
- 8 REMAIN POSITIVE.** This helps customers gain confidence in your ability to help them.
- 9 USE SIMPLE TERMS.** Keep it simple to avoid confusion and mistranslation when working across languages and cultural context, but don’t patronize customers.

In today’s competitive and globalized business climate, businesses who treat their customers with care and respect – including by speaking their language and respecting their cultural norms – will have the most success.



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