

May 21, 2021: American Shopping Culture

Shopping in Stores in Person: Interacting with “sales associates” What do they want from you?

Vocabulary for American Shopping Culture:

Sales associate -a person who is employed by the store. The sales associate’s job is to help the customer (shopper) find what they need, and help complete a smooth purchase transaction.

Sales commission -additional compensation (money) paid to the sales associate for selling a product, and meeting company sales goals. Usually a small percentage of the sale.

Upselling -encouraging the customer to buy a more expensive version of the product they are interested in buying.

Intimidation – to make a customer feel timid and insecure.

Customer Profiling- making assumptions about a customer’s ability to make a purchase based on physical observations such as: race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.

Here is an article how Oprah Winfrey was “profiled” in a luxury store in Switzerland
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/08/10/210574193/why-didnt-the-store-just-let-oprah-buy-the-38-000-handbag>

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Stores can be segmented by price:

- Level 1: Inexpensive
Level 2: Medium to expensive
Level 3: Extremely expensive

Different levels of shops will have different expectations and require different behaviors:

Level 1. Target, Walmart, Kohl's, etc. **(Inexpensive goods)**

- Little to no interaction with a sales associate
- You are allowed to walk about the store
- It is acceptable to touch, handle and examine any product
- You are not expected or required to buy something

Level 2. Macy's, Nordstrom, Bloomingdales, etc. **(Medium to expensive goods)**

- Being approached by a sales associate is highly likely
- You are allowed to walk about the store
- It is acceptable to touch, handle and examine any product
- You are not expected or required to buy something

Level 3. Louis Vuitton, Dior, Chanel, etc. **(Luxury designer - extremely expensive goods!)**

- A sales associate will oversee your movements and activities
- You may, or may not be allowed to walk about the store
- An appointment may be required to visit the store
- It is not acceptable to touch, handle or examine anything, without the sales associate's assistance
- It is expected, and may be "required" to buy something

Expectations differ from level to level. **In today's class we will focus on shopping in a Level 2 store.** Below are three dialogues we will practice to give you an example of a typical encounter in a Level 2 store between the shopper and the sales associate.

Shopping Dialog #1: “Just Looking”

This short dialog is the most common scenario of a typical exchange between a shopper (customer) and a sales associate. Many times, when we enter a store, a sales person will engage us and ask if they can “help us find anything” (buy something). If we do not need or want help, and just want to look around the store, then the appropriate thing to say is “No thank you. I’m just looking.” This simple phrase lets the sales associate know that you do not want to be bothered, and that you would like to be left on your own to explore the goods in the store. The sales associate will move on to another shopper.

Person **A**: sales associate

Person **B**: shopper

A: HI! Can I help you with anything today?

B: No, thank you. I’m just looking.

A: OK. Let me know if there is anything you need.

B: Thank you.

Shopping Dialog #2: “I need to buy bath towels”

In this scenario the shopper becomes intimidated at the upselling technique the sales associate uses. He is not comfortable telling the sales associate that he cannot afford such expensive towels. He makes an excuse to “keep looking” and then leaves the store.

Person **A**: first sales associate

Person **B**: shopper

Person **C**: second sales associate

A: HI! Can I help you find anything?

B: Yes. I’m looking for bath towels.

A: Bath towels are in our home section on the second floor.

B: Thank you.

(Shopper takes the escalator to the second floor)

C: Hello. Can I help you find something?

B: Yes, I am looking for bath towels.

C: Yes, right over here.

(Shopper follows sales associate)

C: What kind of towels are you looking for?

B: I like towels that are very soft.

(Sales associate shows the shopper some towels)

C: Here we have the “Superior Luxury” brand. These are the softest towels on the market.

(Shopper glances at price tag, notices the price of one towel is \$150 dollars; way too much!)

B: Ok, well thank you. I think I will just have a look around.

C: Ok, let me know if I can help you with anything.

B: Thank you

(Shopper leaves store)

Shopping Dialog #3 “I need to buy bath towels”

In this scenario the shopper does not become intimidated at the upselling technique the sales associate uses. He is comfortable telling the sales associate the price range he can afford. He successfully completes his task of buying new bath towels.

A: HI! Can I help you find anything?

B: Yes. I’m looking for bath towels.

A: Bath towels are in our home section on the second floor.

B: Thank you.

(Shopper takes the escalator to the second floor)

C: Hello. Can I help you find something?

B: Yes, I am looking for bath towels.

C: Yes, right over here.

(Shopper follows sales associate)

C: What kind of towels are you looking for?

B: I like towels that are very soft.

(Sales associate shows the shopper some towels)

C: We have the “Superior Luxury” brand. These are the softest towels on the market.

(Shopper glances at price tag, notices the price of one towel is \$150 dollars; way too much!)

B: They sure are super soft, but they are a little more than I want to spend. Do you have any towels in the \$25- to \$50 dollar price range?

C: Yes. Over here we have the “Simple Cotton” brand.

(Shopper sees nice towels in his price range)

B: Oh yes, these are what I am looking for. Do they come in any other colors?

C: No. These here on display are the only colors available.

B: Ok, I would like four of the blue bath towels.

C: Great. I’ll check you out over here.

B: Thank you.

(sales associate takes the payment and processes the transaction)

C: Would you like a bag for 10 cents?

B: No thank you. I have a shopping bag.

C: Ok. You are all set. Thank you for your purchase. Have a great rest of your day!

B: Thank you. You too!

I look forward to seeing you in class. Please feel free to contact me if have any questions or comments about this lesson” annhillen.esl@gmail.com. Thank you!