

Stick to Neutral, Professional Language

- **Avoid overly personal compliments.** Saying things like “You have a beautiful voice” or “You sound really nice” can sound flirty. Instead, focus on work-related praise like:
 - “That’s a great question.”
 - “You explained that clearly.”
- **Don’t use pet names.** Terms like “dear,” “sweetie,” “honey,” or even “ma’am” or “ma” (in some cases) can feel too intimate or old-fashioned to Americans, especially younger ones. This is especially important to consider if you are a man talking to a woman, as pet names may seem patronizing.

Keep Tone Friendly but Not Too Familiar

- Be warm, but don’t sound too enthusiastic or sing-songy — that can be misread.
 - For example: A calm, upbeat “I’d be happy to help with that” is perfect.
 - Avoid sounding overly excited: “Ooooh, I love that!” (unless it’s clearly related to solving their problem).
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace so the student can easily understand you. Enunciate your words and avoid speaking too fast or too softly.
- Don’t use slang, text-speak, or local idioms that the student might not understand. Phrases that are common in your region could confuse the student or seem unprofessional.

Avoid Personal Questions

- Keep the focus on the student’s issue and offer your help without getting too personal. Be friendly and empathetic about their situation, but keep the conversation centered on resolving their problem.
- Don’t ask the student private questions that aren’t relevant to the call. Avoid prying into their personal life, relationships, social media, or appearance – these are outside the scope of a support call and can violate personal boundaries.
 - Don’t ask things like:
 - “Are you married?”
 - “Do you live alone?”

- “Are you doing anything fun today?”
- Don’t make comments or jokes that could be interpreted as flirting or overly personal. For example, never give the impression that you are “checking them out” or trying to “chat them up” – that kind of behavior is out of line for a professional interaction.
- Even small talk should stay neutral and service-related. Safe topics (if the conversation allows) might be:
 - “Is the weather nice where you are today?”
 - “Has it been a busy day for you?”
- Don’t share your own personal details or life stories with the student. It’s okay to be personable, but oversharing (e.g. talking about your day, your feelings, or adding the student on social media) is unprofessional. Keep the relationship friendly but strictly professional.
- Use discernment when bringing up gospel topics. Phrases like “I will be praying for you” or “you need to have faith this will work” may come off as too personal or too judgmental, even when you know you are talking to a member of the church.

Mirror Their Tone

- Americans tend to appreciate mirroring: if the customer is serious and direct, match that tone. If they’re laughing or being more casual, it’s okay to loosen up a little — just don’t overdo it.
- Let the student set the tone for familiarity. If the student is being formal and polite, mirror that formality; if they seem relaxed and casual, you can chat in a friendly way too – but always within professional limits. Remember that being *too* familiar too soon can feel uncomfortable.
- Don’t use humor or sarcasm that might be misunderstood. What’s funny in one culture might not translate well to another. It’s okay to smile or have a polite chuckle if the student says something light-hearted, but avoid making jokes yourself unless you are sure they are appropriate. **When in doubt, leave it out.**

Use Professional Phrases to Close

- Before ending the call, make sure you’ve addressed all of the student’s needs. Ask, *“Is there anything else I can help you with today?”* to give them a chance to bring up other concerns. This ensures the student feels fully helped.

- Don't prolong the call once the issue is resolved. After you've thanked the student and wished them well, it's time to end the call. Lingering or trying to continue chatting beyond the business purpose can make things awkward. Keep the goodbye short, friendly, and professional.
- Avoid lingering or emotional closings like "It was really great talking to you" or "I'll miss helping you." Instead, go with:
 - "Thanks for calling today, and let us know if you need anything else."
 - "Have a great day, and take care!"
 - Don't end the call abruptly. Always wrap up with a courteous goodbye or thank-you so the student feels appreciated. Simply hanging up after solving the issue can seem rude or dismissive, so take a moment to say farewell.

Watch Out for Cultural Language Differences

- Some phrases that are common in other countries can sound strange or intimate in the U.S. For example:
 - "I'll be here for you always" → might sound romantic
 - "I am at your service" → sounds too formal or even flirtatious depending on tone
 - Stick to: "I'm happy to assist you" or "I'm here to help."

Bonus Tip: Smile While You Talk

This helps keep the tone warm and professional — not cold, but not flirty either. It's a great middle ground Americans appreciate.