

Hundred Dollar Bills

The typical man who whips a hundred out of his wallet, envelope or money clip is dirty and covered in grime. Not only his hands, but his face and his clothes too are covered in what could perhaps be mud that has dried into crumbling dust. He's a big man, tall, well built and slightly intimidating. I can sense that he wants to get out of here as quickly as possible which makes me feel pressured. This makes me increasingly nervous as I know that I always make some kind of fatal error when under pressure from a particularly unsavory customer. I try not to cringe as I take the bill out of his dirt encrusted fingers. He must have just gotten out of work, construction or something. He has only bought twelve dollars worth of groceries, twenty at the most thus taking all the treasured fives and tens out of my drawer. I uncap my marker and draw a little line across the bill hoping it will be counterfeit. That would teach him to come through my line with his unnecessary hundred dollar bill. I say a silent goodbye to my last ten and five before I take them out of the now empty slots. I count the man back his change angrily hoping he will realize what a complete inconvenience he is. Often times I don't have enough change in my drawer and have to call a manager over to break his unwanted hundred. The man dares to raise his eyebrows in frustration and impatience and I use all of my self control to not say sarcastically, "Oh, I'm sorry. It must be really hard for you only having hundred dollar bills. Maybe you should have bought more items."

EBT (Food stamps through a plastic card)

A woman paying with food stamps is usually very thin, but not unhealthily so. She looks tired and disheveled with messy hair and mismatching clothes. She has dark, tan skin like a smoker. Her boyfriend or husband looks tough and scary. He is also thin and has several piercings or tattoos. They are both very young and have a little girl sitting in the front of the carriage and a little boy in the back. Like most people with their EBT cards, they don't know how to use it. They tell me they are using a debit card and when I figure out it's in fact an EBT card they can't figure out why they have to start over. I tell them the total of the order and have them slide their card. They enter their pin number, but it doesn't go through and I have to put a piece of paper through the printer to find out what went wrong even though I already know. Insufficient funds. They are outrageous and exclaim angrily that they just had two hundred dollars added onto their card yesterday. I calmly show them the piece of paper that says they only have \$48.23 and they grumble, but slide their card again. I manually enter the amount and silently thank God as the order goes through. The other common problem that can arise is that people with EBT cards don't know what is or isn't covered, or able to be paid with food stamps. At the end of their order the card goes through, but there is a remaining balance of \$11.99. They point to the screen in outrage and look at me like I'm stupid and don't know how to do my job. I tell them that the hot pizza isn't covered because it's prepared food. They don't believe me and tell me they've bought pizza with their card before or that there's no difference between frozen and cooked pizza. Who is the stupid one now? I call my manager over who tells them the exact same

thing I just told them. Angrily, she takes out a twenty dollar bill and hands it to me, muttering under her breath. The last thing I want to say is, "Have a great day."

Checks

A little, old lady with very short, curly white hair shuffles into my lane. Right away I know she's going to pay with a check. She's too paranoid to use a debit card and wrongly assumes it's more complicated. It's not. In fact, it takes about ten minutes less time to slide a card rather than go through the process of writing and printing a check.

"Pack the bags lightly, young man," she tells the bagger sternly. He stares at her three items. I ring up her prune juice and cat food and tell her how much the order comes to.

"How much?" She asks. I tell her again and she squints at the screen. Digging through her purse, she takes out her checkbook and fills out the check. She then hands me the check. I politely remind her that she needs to give me her Market Basket card as well. I breathe a silent sigh of relief as she hands me her card from her wallet. A lot of people don't understand that you need to sign up for a Market Basket card to be able to write checks which causes all sorts of problems and delays. Once I have the card I also have to remind her that she needs to confirm the amount on the pin pad as well. I put the check through the printer, flip it over and put it through again. Before I can even take it out of the printer she demands to see the amount thinking that a young person like me wouldn't know to do that. I smile tightly and hand her the receipt.

Debit

I don't have much to say about the people who pay with debit except, I love them. They are by far the most average, pleasant people who come through my line at work. A normal looking man and woman and their several children pay with a debit card. They are neat and nicely dressed and very friendly. We have some conversation going on between them, my bagger and myself as I ring up their groceries. At the end of the order he slides his card, enters his pin number and the order goes through smoothly without incident. I turn to the printer, laughing at something funny he or she has said and hand him the receipt, smiling. I tell them all to have a great day and I genuinely mean it.