

Sample Words That Work

This sheet provides samples of ways to use words that work.

1. “And” for “but”

Typical supervisor interaction: You did a good job on the shelving, but there is more to do.

Alternative statement: You did a good job on the shelving, *and* there is more to do.

Typical staff interaction about a patron: The library user says she did not damage the book, but someone is responsible.

Alternative statement: The library user says she did not damage the book, *and* someone is responsible.

Typical peer interaction: I like the photos of your grandkids, but I need you to relieve Chris at the reference desk.

Alternative statement: I like the photos of your grandkids, *and* I need you to relieve Chris at the reference desk.

2. Yes,...

Yes, and the books on the cart need to be shelved before the end of the shift.

Yes, and the book needs to be repaired.

Yes, and the reference desk needs to be staffed right now for the evening rush.

3. Can ask, can put...

I *can ask* someone to help you find where the oversized art books go.

I *can ask* the director to clarify the policy on the responsibility of the library user regarding books checked out and returned damaged.

I *can put* the photos of your grandkids up on the staff room bulletin board for you, so you aren't late relieving Chris at the reference desk.

4. Longer or shorter explanations

Longer: The history of the evolution of the application of the Dewey Decimal system to modern scientific concepts, which did not exist in the 19th century, has been one of the more satisfying aspects of the professional cataloger's bibliographic duties.

Shorter: The catalog number for books on digital television is **621.38807**.

Longer: For the past three years, an increasing number of reference librarians have been spending their break time comparing photos of their grandchildren, to the point that the people who are on the reference desk, waiting to be relieved so that they can take their break, are complaining that they deserve an equal amount of time on their break, resulting in unofficial longer breaks and a growing hostility among librarians at the reference desk, particularly in the evening.

Shorter: Please return to the reference desk promptly at the end of your break.

5. Please tell me more...

Typical: I know why you can't get the shelving finished on time:

Alternative: *Please tell me more* about what happened on your shift last night.

Typical: The book is damaged and the library user will pay for her carelessness.

Alternative: *Please tell me more* about what happened to the book?

Typical: Chris has a big problem getting back to the reference desk on time.

Alternative: Chris, *please tell me more* about the reference desk schedule.

6. Next...

Next time, try spending ten minutes organizing the book cart while you are still in tech services; you will find it will speed your work when you are in the stacks shelving.

Next time, please thank the library user for returning the book on time and ignore the damage.

Next time, make sure the clock in the staff break room is working and displays the correct time!

7. Instead...

Instead of waiting until the end of the day to shelve, please shelve books whenever the book cart has more than 20 books.

Instead of telling the library user that she is lying about the damaged book, please ignore scuffs and stains on the covers of circulating children's books.

Instead of coming into my office to complain about librarians returning to the reference desk late, please talk to the person privately and find out her side of the story first.

8. Despite...

Despite the fact that we reorganized consumer nonfiction and books are not where they used to be, you will still be expected to learn the new system by the end of the month.

Despite the fact that the damaged cover bothers you, the library's policy is not to charge for damage to the covers of circulating children's books.

Despite the fact that you and Chris seem to rub each other the wrong way, I expect you to stay civil and friendly to her, even when you disagree.

9. Satisfy...

What would *satisfy* your concerns about shelving in the new consumer nonfiction display?

What would *satisfy* your concerns about damage to children's books?

What would *satisfy* your concerns about the scheduling disagreements on the reference desk?