

Talking with Patrons During COVID-19 Phased Reopening

General reminders:

- Some people are unable to wear a mask due to medical reasons. We do not ask if that is the case, nor do we ask what that condition is. If someone identifies as being medically unable to wear a mask, we will respect that and allow them to enter and use the facilities without one. We will ask that they wear a blank blue bordered name sticker that we will provide. This way staff will know at a glance the patron has been approached and we don't have to approach them again.
- Patrons can't see you smiling. A wave and open body language goes a long way.
- If you are tired, cranky, or frustrated, maybe tap someone else to approach a patron. Our moods can affect the moods of others.
- In the same way, a patron's mood can affect how they receive information. Don't assume the worst. Some people really do just forget the rules.
- Curbside service is ALWAYS an option, regardless of the reason. Five year old kid having a melt-down? Offer to pull some books for the parent while the kid runs off some steam in the grass.

When a patron comes in without a mask

- Offer a friendly greeting first. Don't "come in hot" or assume the worst.
 - "Welcome back! We're so happy to have people in the building again."
- Offer a mask. Remind them it's the law to wear one when in an enclosed public space. Some people really do just forget.
 - "We have some masks available over there if you forgot your mask today. We all have to follow the regulations in order to stay open."
- If they self-identify as someone who can't wear a mask due to medical issues:
 - "We recognize some people can't wear the mask due to medical reasons. You can wear this sticker instead so other staff know this is the case and we don't have to ask you again."
- If they refuse to wear a mask, offer an alternative. We can't allow entrance to the building, but we can still provide service.
 - "Since you're not wearing your mask today, what would you like me to get for you while you wait outside?"
- Bring a buddy if you feel uncomfortable. You can call for backup and/or the police if the situation escalates.
 - "Hey Jan, can you find Kathy? Maybe my supervisor can help us find a solution."
 - If you are asked to find a supervisor, any supervisor will do. You don't have to come back empty handed because someone is in a meeting or on lunch.

When a patron is a little too close for comfort

- Don't make a big deal out of it. Avoid placing blame.
 - "Whoops, we've drifted too close."
- If you can't back up yourself, ask politely if they can step back.
 - For instance, when shelving or pulling a book: "Can you take a step back please while I get to the shelf behind you? I'll be quick."

- Remind patrons of the rules regarding spaces.
 - “We have to maintain social distancing in order to stay open. Can I leave this on the table for you to pick-up?”
- If the patron insists on closeness, you can retreat or use items as a barrier.
 - “Let me hop onto this desk computer and check on that for you.”
 - Staff can shift to maintain a piece of furniture or cart between you and the patron.

If there is a disagreement between two patrons:

- Approach with a calm and friendly demeanor.
 - “We’re so happy to see everyone using the building again.”
- Bring a buddy. Separate the two as much as possible.
 - “Why don’t I help you over here while Andrew helps him.”
- Listen to the patron’s concerns. Remember, the patron can’t see your face so nodding or shaking your head, maintaining eye contact, and making noises of affirmation and listening (“I understand. And then what? Mmm-hmmm”) are all encouraged.
- Do not voice your own opinions. Reiterate the rules. Steer the conversation towards how you can help.
 - “Yes we are trying our best to maintain the six feet social distance and I know the aisles are narrow. Would you like me to get the book you wanted while you browse our DVDs?”
 - “Yes we do require masks in the building when people are able to wear them. Would you feel more comfortable using one of our laptops outside?”

Phrases Borrowed from Other Libraries

- **Computer use:** “All computers are fully self-service at this time. Due to social distancing requirements, staff are not able to provide any form of hands-on computer assistance.”
- **Fake news folks:** “The Library follows the guidance of federal, state and local health officials in regards to available services. We look forward to having more offerings as safety permits.”
- **Patron feedback about reopening plan:** “Our current plan was approved by Library administrators and our Board. I will pass along your input but any changes to our current policies will have to go through the appropriate channels.”
- **Chatty Cathy:** “We’ve got a lot of catch up to do since we were closed. Did you need more help before I return to my station/task?”
- **If a patron complains about another person in the building:** “Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. We’ll handle things from here.”
- **Copier problems:** “Since the machine isn’t cooperating today, can I take this to the back and make the copies for you?”

Script when we close doors and reach capacity:

May I have your attention please? The building has reached capacity and there are people waiting to enter. If you have been in the building for close to 30 minutes, please finish your task and make your way towards the exit so others can use the building. Thank you for your cooperation.