

How to Respond to Customers

This document provides retailers with suggested responses to people who attempt to buy or otherwise acquire solvents for harmful purposes.

Tips for Retailers

1. Remain calm and friendly. It's best not to argue with the customer; just restate firmly the company policy. Most customers will accept this approach and leave the store.
2. Use 'we' not 'I'. Don't take direct responsibility for this policy. Telling a customer: "We can't sell you this product" indicates that it is not your fault, but a management or government decision. This makes it harder for the purchaser to blame the individual sales person.
3. It would be best not to refuse to sell if there is any threat or fear of violence. If at any stage you believe that somebody could be injured because you have refused to sell a product, then comply with their wishes and call the manager or the police.
4. If a customer appears intoxicated, exercise caution and remember safety of all customers and staff is the first priority.

Suggested Responses

Customer says:	Retailer says:
You can't refuse to sell to me; I'll have you up for discrimination.	We're sorry, but we do have the right not to sell this product.
You have to sell to me; I'm over 18 years old.	We've been told the law covers all age groups and we have to comply with the law or we can be prosecuted.
The law says you have to sell to me or I'll report you to the authorities.	I really don't want to argue with you. You have the right to complain but I think you will find we are acting within the law.
My mother has sent me up for 3 cans of spray paint.	We'd like to help but you will need to bring your mother/father or an adult in with you. The Government has directed us not to sell this product to young people.
I have a letter from my mother so it's OK for me to buy it.	As above.
You may as well sell it to me or I'll just go up the street and buy it.	The Government has advised us to restrict sales of this product. We think you will find the same response in that store. Ring the manager of the store mentioned and discuss your concerns with them.
This (product) will not do any harm. It's not one of those things that kids sniff.	We're sorry but that's one of the products that the Government has asked us to control the sale of because of the harm it can cause if used incorrectly.
Please give me some just this once and I won't ask again.	We're sorry but we don't sell this product to young people. The Government has asked us not to and it is against company policy.
Why won't you sell it to me, you've sold it to the guy in front of me?	Focus on the difference between the customers, i.e. age, when making a decision.
Groups of teenagers standing around areas where solvent products are displayed.	Ask if you can help them. If they do not want to purchase ask them politely to move on. If they refuse, call the manager or store security.
Frequent purchase of solvent-based products from the same individual.	We're sorry but there are restrictions on the sale of this product.