You Don't Say -
The Five Forbidden Phrases

To sharpen your telephone communication skills, memorize the “Five Forbidden Phrases” listed below. By avoiding these forbidden phrases and instead using the recommended responses, you’ll be able to notice a positive change in your telephone conversations.

1. **Forbidden Phrase:** “I don’t know”  
   **Recommended Response:** “That’s a good question. Let me find out.”

2. **Forbidden Phrase:** “Just a second”  
   **Recommended Response:** “It may take me a few minutes to get that information. Are you able to hold while I check on that or would you prefer I call you back?”

3. **Forbidden Phrase:** “No” (at the start of a sentence)  
   **Recommended Response:** Eliminate it at the start of a sentence.

4. **Forbidden Phrase:** “We can’t do that”  
   **Recommended Response:** “That’s a tough one. Let me see what I can do.”

5. **Forbidden Phrase:** “You’ll have to…”  
   **Recommended Response:** “What you’ll need to do is…”

**Discussion Guidelines:**

Discuss your responses as a group. Can you come up with other examples of forbidden phrases and recommended responses?

What is your choice for the most irritating forbidden phrase?

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Are there any others you would like to add?

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Why are the recommended responses listed above more effective than the forbidden phrases?

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