

Exercise

Structuring a reply

Why does reply structure matter?

There are multiple reasons why it's important to structure your support reply well, but the most impactful reason as to why you should care is it will impact the end-users satisfaction level and their affinity/loyalty to your brand. With Customer Experience (CX) becoming a bigger priority for companies, customer service plays a key role in making or breaking this. Why is satisfaction something you should focus on? According to Esteban Kolsky, 72% of customers will share a positive experience with 6 or more people. Whereas on the flip side, if a customer is unhappy, 13% of them will share their experience with **15 or even more**. If asked to share a positive and negative experience you have had with a brand - the likelihood is the negative experience is more front of mind and you'd want to do your duty to share this with your tribe so they don't suffer - admirable as a person, but can be a deadly blow to a brand.

That's why setting yourself up for success with a strong reply design should be a top priority.

When communicating with a non-human entity, it can already be an uphill battle as there is a negative connotation around chatbots. Therefore building a structure that is customer-centric, with plenty of options, concise communication, and reducing repetitive questions, you can help change that bias that your customers might have.

We have collected a list of best practices on our knowledge base for chat communication that you can also review [here](#).

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Reply design tips

As an overall flow, you want to work on a funnel approach - start broad and get more granular based on the information a customer provides. We would typically recommend:

1. Confirm that the bot understood the intent correctly / does the customer need to rephrase?
2. Define all possible scenarios and include an escape route / false positive catch
3. Share general information, FAQs, and self-guided instructions based on each scenario
4. Validate whether this helped by doing a resolution check / provide a call to action where applicable
 - a. Resolution check:
 - i. If it helped - ask whether they have further requests
 - ii. If it didn't help offer further assistance if available or escalate to a human agent.

In each individual message, some tips we can suggest are:

- If you ask for something - make it an instruction, not a question that can be answered with just a yes or no.
- Consider empathy in your replies - when you ask for something - say please, when it is provided - say thank you, and if someone is upset/angry with something - say sorry.
- Consider the different scenarios a situation presents, but also the different ways a customer can respond - Would they type a certain type of answer? Can you include buttons to guide them?
- Make it a conversation, so the person feels like there is a human touch, and it's not just a bot, but that their request is being looked after.
- Understand that people may say something but might not be saying it in the clearest way - to avoid assumptions or going down the wrong path - give them options.

Considering this - which conversation is better? *Purple messages show the visitor's reply*

Option 1	Option 2
<p>Hi there! I would love to answer any questions you might have. How can I help you today?</p> <p><i>My order is missing!</i></p> <p>Sorry to hear that! Let's get that found for you, I will ask for some clarification to ensure we get you the right help. Use the buttons on the options below, tell me a/b/c or say "none" if those aren't correct</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Order not showing in account Order taking too long to be delivered Order shows delivered but I don't have it <p><i>A</i></p> <p>Thanks for that clarity! Let me provide some general information and if that doesn't help, we can keep talking until you have the answer you need. To see your Order History you need to be logged in > go to your Profile > select Order History. This order should be displayed there. Are you able to see it there?</p> <p><i>No!</i></p> <p>Sorry about that! The common reasons this doesn't show are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The order was made with a different email address/account The order was not successful <p>To figure out which it could be please tell me did you receive a confirmation email or see a confirmation screen with an order number?</p> <p><i>No email or confirmation</i></p> <p>Okay - then it's highly likely the order didn't go through. However, before you order again and maybe there was a typo in the email, check your banking app to see if any charges were taken - depending on your bank this can take varying amounts of time to show - but we typically our customers can see it within 2 hours. Did that help?</p> <p><i>No!</i></p> <p>Sorry, that didn't help - what I would suggest is we look into this further with a specialist in the team. Would you like that?</p> <p><i>Yes!</i></p> <p>Great please use the form to provide your full name, email & postcode</p> <p>I can then forward you to an agent and they will then use this for their investigation</p>	<p>Hi! How can I help?</p> <p><i>My order is missing</i></p> <p>Can I have your order number?</p> <p><i>No</i></p> <p>An order number looks like X & Y and you can find your order number in your profile and in your confirmation email</p> <p>Can I have the order number?</p> <p><i>No</i></p> <p>If you don't have your order number, and can't find it in your emails or profile, it's possible your order didn't go through. You can do these 2 things to confirm if this is the case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check your spam folder to try and find the email Check your banking app to see if there is a charge <p>Did that help?</p> <p><i>No!</i></p> <p>Okay - let me get you someone who can help you further.</p>

The chances are you have seen more conversations with bots like option 2 as they want to provide information in a succinct way and escalate quickly - which can be good - however in the example above, we see just from the phrase my order is missing there could be multiple scenarios a user could be referring to.

By validating what their situation is we can give more specific information - at different points in that conversation people would be filtered out and only those who are having real trouble would be escalated - reducing the load for your customer service team.

By collecting information from the user, we are saving the virtual agent time, especially if this was escalated to a ticket to have all the information they need to investigate.

Template

The below template can be used for you to start thinking of how to structure your replies - depending on how many scenarios you can add/remove subsequent rows/columns.

{Intent Name}			
Step	Message Content		
Intent Confirmation			
Response Scenarios Process-wise what's the next step?	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	False Positive / Catch-all
Response Options? What do you expect the customer to say? This helps decide what visitor message options to create			
General Information / FAQ / Self-guided Instructions			
Resolution Check			
Follow-up Response(s)			