Greetings

In Person

- Staff working at a public services desk should be attentive and alert at all times. If you’re looking at a computer screen or reading a print item you should not be totally engrossed but instead, look up, make eye contact, smile and be approachable when patrons come near the desk. Body language and non-verbal cues are very important. Staff should not be slumped over or otherwise appear not engaged. Greeting should be something like: “Hello (Hi), How may I help you?” Stand up if it’s appropriate.

Telephone

- Telephone should be answered within three rings by identifying the library/department and “may I help you” or “how may I help you.”
- When transferring a call to another phone number, always first give the patron the destination number in case the call gets disconnected. Wait for one ring and then hang up. If time permits, wait for the phone to be answered and identify yourself, indicate you’re transferring the call and very briefly what it’s about. If the call isn’t answered get back with the caller and suggest they call that number back later.
- When turning over a call to another desk staff, staff should pick up the referred call by saying “Hello, this is (name or department), how may I help you?” If you know the context of the patron’s call, to speed the transaction you could try to recap what you know, such as “…I understand you can’t renew your books online, is that right?”
- Always use the HOLD button when placing a patron on HOLD. At the end of interaction, ask (in some way) if the patron needs anything else.

Chat

- Chatters usually begin a session with their question so respond with something like “Hi, I’ll be glad to help you with that.” If they don’t then begin the chat with a short, friendly greeting and ask “how may I help you?” or something friendly and welcoming.
Interacting with Patrons

In General

- Be approachable. Communicate in a friendly and professional, yet informal manner.
- If you are uncertain what the patron is asking, rephrase the question and ask for confirmation that you understand what the patron wants.
- Try to develop a rapport by asking open-ended and follow-up questions to make sure the patron has the information he/she needs.
  
  Question: I need information on non-verbal communication
  
  Response: Is there a particular type of non-verbal communication you’re interested in such as body language?
- Find out what the patron has already tried, and encourage the patron to contribute ideas.
- Allow the patron to finish asking the question before commenting.
- Give the patron frequent positive feedback, and show interest in their question or problem.
- Never say “No” or say the library doesn’t have something without offering positive alternatives. For example, if we don’t have a book tell the patron about ILL or offer to check the public library catalog. Students should refer questions to a staff member if they’re uncertain.
- Avoid library jargon.
- Never hesitate to ask for help from a colleague if you feel that you are unable to answer the question on your own.
- If you are unable to answer a question quickly, thoroughly and accurately, ask for contact information for a follow up.
- Always try to make people feel as if the question they ask isn’t a stupid one – patrons frequently say things like “you’ll probably think this is a stupid question” and we always reassure them that we like to get questions and don’t expect them to know everything.
- When referring to another department be sure to verify that the material/resource/person is appropriate.
- UNCG has a very diverse population and it’s important to be sensitive to working with patrons from a wide range of cultures, ethnicities, orientations and disabilities.

Special tips for chat

- NEVER USE ALL CAPS! It translates to shouting.
- Give the patron frequent positive feedback and show interest in their question or problem.
• Be aware of chat abbreviations and lingo that is used by many patrons.
• Use emoticons when appropriate to convey friendliness.
• Be patient with slow replies on the patron’s end. There are many reasons why this may be happening (slow connection, poor typing skills, multitasking, etc.)
• Let the user know what you are doing (i.e., give them the play by play) if you need to perform a time consuming task. Example:
  “Sorry, still searching…”
  “I’m going to walk over and ask at Circulation. Would you mind waiting a minute?”
  “I’m going to try finding this in a different database, just a second please…”
• Break long messages into short statements, instead of sending one long, potentially overwhelming message. Example:
  “First, go to the library homepage, http://library.uncg.edu/…”
  “Then select “Databases” near the center of the page…”
  “Then select WorldCat…”
• Let the patron end the chat session

Written Communication (includes email)

• Start all messages with a salutation such as “Dear (patron’s name)”
• Keep messages clear and concise, stating the purpose clearly at the beginning of the message.
• Observe rules of punctuation and spelling (no slang, no all-caps, no texting abbreviations, etc.), Use spell check before sending.
• Provide your name in the closing, above the department contact info signature line.

Follow Up/ending the interview

• Ask in some way if their need has been fulfilled – e.g., “Does that answer your question?” “Is there something else I can help you with?” “Is that all you need right now?” “Need anything else?”
• Remind them to get back in touch if they need something else in the future. Remind them of the multiple ways they can contact us.

Going the extra mile

• Whenever possible, walk a patron to a destination rather than pointing them somewhere. This includes going to the stacks if they have been there and are unable to find something or if the call numbers might be difficult to locate, as in the basement.
• If you’re referring a patron to another part of the Library either walk them there or call ahead to make sure someone is ready to help him/her.
• Be flexible about staying after hours to provide a consultation for a student who works full time.
• Feel empowered to be flexible in order to provide service. For example, pulling a book for someone who is disabled or who is coming into the library from out of town to use a single item is certainly appropriate service.
• Going the extra mile does not include offering help that verges on doing a person’s assignment for them. We should be teaching people to use the resources, not doing the work for them, but this can be a tough call sometimes.
• Recognize some needs cannot be fulfilled.

General Tips

• Avoid library jargon. For example, instead of writing/saying, “EBSCO would work for you”
  Write/say instead:
  “Why don’t we search an article database, where you can access full-text magazine and journal articles on that subject?”
• However, do cite or mention the source you are using. Example:
  “I found some interesting articles in the database Academic Search Premier…”
  “Let me tell you/show you how to get to that database…”
• Appropriate language and word choice are very important. For example, offer suggestions to patrons, not commands, and don’t demean their research skills.
  Examples:
  Don’t write/say:
  “You have to use the catalog…”
  “You should have used the “Red Box” first”
  “Why didn’t you search PsycInfo?”
  Instead, try writing/saying:
  “Next time, I suggest…”
  “The Journal A-Z list will help you with that...do you know where that is?”
  “Well PsycInfo is a great source for psych research…”
• Staff should not engage in oud non-work-related conversations that me be overheard by patrons. If you are chatting with a colleague when a patron approaches be sure to discontinue the conversation. Staff should not have their cell phones when they’re at the desk unless they have an emergency and have discussed it with their supervisor. Staff should not be surfing the internet, doing social media or personal email while at the desk.
Attire

- Staff should wear clean, neat clothes with reasonable modesty (all pertinent parts covered, please). No controversial T-shirts, please. Shoes or sandals should be worn at all times.