

RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS

Follow these seven simple steps for a professional and thoughtful response to any negative review:

- ❑ **Step 1: Get on a First Name Basis**
Regardless of the reason for your bad review, you want to be cordial and personable to your reviewer. If the writer included their name, use that in your address. Avoid phrases like “Dear Customer” because they can sound impersonal. Reply with the guest’s first name, establishing that you are taking their feedback seriously.
- ❑ **Step 2: Say, “Thank You”**
While it might be difficult to thank the reviewer for their critical press, it can help turn an unpleasant situation into a more positive one. Plus, it can put the customer at ease and illustrate that you are approachable and understanding to your future customers.
- ❑ **Step 3: Apologize and Identify Areas of Improvement**
A heartfelt “I am sorry for your experience” lets your reviewer know that you are taking their input to heart and can restore trust. Here is also where your internal teams should take the opportunity to look into the matter and find areas of improvement.
- ❑ **Step 4: Identify Their Dissatisfaction**
Part of your apology should talk specifically about why your reviewer is unhappy. If the review was about the bathroom being out of paper towels or their soup arriving at room temperature instead of hot, include those details in your reply. Also, let them know that you sympathize with their unsatisfactory experience.
- ❑ **Step 5: Take Ownership**
The key here is not merely to say the incident won’t happen again. While you want to assure your guest that they won’t have the same experience next time they dine with you, you want to be clear and specific in your answer as to how you plan on mitigating a similar mistake in the future.
- ❑ **Step 6: Extend an Opportunity to Talk One-on-One**
In your reply, tell your reviewer you’d be happy to discuss the matter further and let them know the best way to contact you personally. Not only does this give you the chance to learn more about the situation, but it also takes the conversation offline.
- ❑ **Step 7: Encourage Them to Come Back**
Extend an invitation for a return visit to assure them you solved the problem. You might choose to offer a financial incentive, like complimentary appetizers, discount coupons, or even a free meal.

