

PASS
BASICS

# Passenger Service and Safety

## How to properly assist and interact with your passengers

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DISCLAIMER

The PASS Basic Training Manual and Power Point Presentation is for the use of participants in the CTAA-PASS Basic Program. It is offered only for information purposes. It is not intended to be all inclusive or to address the hazards faced by each participant specifically. The manual specifically does not address issues or duties arising out of any Federal, State or local statutes, ordinance or regulations, except in a direct manner. Users must evaluate their own needs and adapt the information and procedures in this manual to meet those needs. CTAA assumes no liability for the contents herein or lack thereof.

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PASS Basics Segment # 1

In this segment we will cover:

- You as a professional
- Customer Service
- Communication
- Stress Management

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## YOU AS A PROFESSIONAL

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSIONAL

Each is...

- ...specially trained for a job
- ...required to have special skills
- ...required to meet licensing standards
- ...provides a valuable service

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The Final characteristic of a professional is high level performance at all times.

It's easy to be positive, feel good, and treat others well when everything is fine. The difficulty comes when things are **NOT** going well. This is the true test of your skill as a professional.

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When being pleasant to passengers is not easy, try following one or more of these techniques:

- **Refocus** – think about positive things in order to stop thinking about negative things
- **Talk it out** – talk with other operators and supervisors
- **Understand** – If there is a problem, contribute to the solution as best you can

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A professional driver must possess the necessary skills to work with passengers, family of passengers, agency administrators, etc.

Driving a motor vehicle safely is not enough. You must also;

- Make the passenger feel welcome
- Answer questions

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- Make the ride safe and comfortable
- Handle any problems that occur
- Follow special instructions
- Keep accurate and timely records of your work

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Passengers rightfully expect safe, efficient and comfortable transportation service.

Take time to permit passengers to board and exit comfortably and, be certain to provide assistance to each passenger.

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Practically everything done while performing your job and the manner in which you conduct yourself while performing it, contributes either favorably or unfavorably to the passenger's image of you and your agency.

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KEEP IN MIND:

Good performance is taken for granted – poor performance is always recognized.

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Support and explain agency policies when dealing with passengers.

- Speak positively about your agency. Avoid talking about how tough your job is.
- Talk over agency/organization problems with supervisors – NOT passengers.

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Three basic rules or skills that you must know and follow:

**1. Provide safe, reliable and expert service**

- Drive safely and smoothly at all times
- Speak clearly, calmly and with respect
- Offer assistance to every passenger

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**Be courteous and patient**

- Use respectful language and tone of voice
- Leave your troubles at home or with dispatch

**3. Avoid arguments**

- Remain polite
- Do not get angry

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When you perform your job as a professional, everyone benefits.

You benefit because your passengers will:

- Treat you more pleasantly
- Willingly follow your directions
- Respect you as a professional

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Your passengers benefit through:

- Safe, comfortable and reliable transportation

Your agency benefits because you help to:

- Increase supportive ridership
- Improve community support and potential funding
- Reduce insured risks

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CUSTOMER SERVICE

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The driver is the most important asset of a transit agency. However, the most important person at the transit agency is the customer. Without the customer, there is no agency.

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## Who are your customers?

Think in terms of who receives the service and how that service impacts that individual or group. Also, think about who provides the service and how the perceptions of employees, funders, contributors and taxpayers have a strong positive or negative effect on your service.

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### Groups to consider as customers include:

- **Potential riders** – these individuals are not using your service now, but may in the future
- **Existing riders** – these are the people for whom your service exists

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- **Former riders** – these individuals were users of your service, which made a difference in their lives; either positive or negative
- **Indirect customers** – those not using, but influenced or affected by your service, e.g., employer or family of a person you transport

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- **Funders of service** – this can include funding agencies, state or federal departments of transportation, service clubs, municipalities and individual community members and elected officials
- **Co workers** – In a transit agency, every employee is a customer to at least one other employee.

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Of all the things you do as a transportation vehicle operator, the way you interact with your passengers will have the most influence on your job and the future of your agency.

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Consider these facts:

- As a driver, you represent your employer
- In the course of a day, you have more contact with the public than any other employee of your agency
- A large number of motorists and pedestrians see your vehicle

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A passenger should never have to ask for assistance because the driver failed to offer it. As a driver, you are responsible for passenger safety.

Therefore, assistance must be offered to every passenger, every day. You are responsible for assisting passengers in and out of the vehicle.

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Some riders may wish to board or exit the vehicle on their own. Be close by to assist these individuals should it be needed. If injury occurs as a result of negligence because a driver failed to get out of the driver's seat, you, the driver, may be found at fault.

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Helping passengers get on and off the vehicles requires some judgment calls from the driver. It may be safer, and faster, to request the passenger use a "boarding wheelchair" and the lift. In accordance with the ADA, if a boarding wheelchair is not available, the passenger may stand on the lift.

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When providing assistance, it is very important to remember you are dealing with a person.

Ask before taking direct action.

Safety is extremely important and must remain a high priority. Therefore, if a passenger refuses your offer of assistance, you must be close by and watch for signs of trouble.

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### **Handling customer (passenger) complaints**

- Listen non-defensively, no matter how outrageous the complaint may seem, listen without bias or judgment
- Validate the feelings of the person making the complaint. Acknowledge the frustration and confirm their right to feel upset

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- Remember, feelings are not always rational, but are real – don't make promises or try to solve the problem in the heat of the moment
  - Try to see the problem from their point of view
- Do you know what your company policy is concerning complaints?

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# COMMUNICATION

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# COMMUNICATION

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Communication is a series of obstacles and openings.

You are in a position to control whether those obstacles become problems, or whether you can find the opening for effective communication, which can help toward solving problems and make you and those around you feel better.

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To understand your passenger's point of view, put yourself in their place. Treat others as you would want to be treated, or how you would want a transportation vehicle operator to treat a member of your family.

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Emotional communication is more likely to get out of control. Make a determined effort to stay calm.

Anxiety or frustration is caused by any number of reasons, including personal problems, traffic, schedule, unfriendliness, etc. Anxiety will limit an operator's capacity to be tolerant and understanding.

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**Three steps for better communication:**

1. **Be alert to the person** – be an active listener
2. **Adjust how you communicate**
  - Use simpler words
  - Show how to do the things you are telling to do
  - Write it down or draw a simple picture
  - You may need to give the information more than once
3. **Check for comprehension**
  - Ask the passenger what they are going to do now

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### Tips on communicating with passengers

- Treat adults as adults
- Offer assistance - ASK
- Speak directly to the passenger
- If you do not understand the passenger do not pretend that you did

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## STRESS

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As a vehicle operator, your job is a very responsible one.

You are required to handle many tasks:

- Operate the vehicle in a safe manner
- Remain aware of all that is happening around you in traffic, on sidewalks and in your vehicle

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- Provide assistance to passengers
- Be attentive to special needs and potential emergencies
- **Always** perform your duties in a pleasant, courteous manner

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Clearly you face stresses on the job. It is extremely important that you learn to deal with them.

Remember – you are your agency’s most important asset. Perform your job as a professional and you will be successful.

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## Tips on dealing with stress

- **Deal with the cause**  
*If tension comes from a relationship, talk out your differences. If the problem is with a task, look at what you can do to positively address the responsibility.*
- **Talk out your troubles**  
*Find a level headed person you can trust.*
- **Learn to pace yourself**  
*Take one thing at a time.*

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- **Give in occasionally**  
*Ask yourself, "Is this really worth fighting for?"*
- **Give yourself a pat on the back for things you do well**
- **Give the other person a break**  
*Avoid the tendency to want to "get there first".*

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- **Plan for change**  
*Coping with the unexpected is a big source of stress.*
- **Develop a positive and outgoing attitude**  
*Look at the bright side of things and beyond yourself. Positive feelings help fight stress.*
- **Smile and have fun**  
*Plan to do something you enjoy as part of your regular routine.*

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**SEGMENT ONE TEST**

In order to continue, 10 of the following 10 questions must be answered correctly. If **10** of your answers are not correct you must review the information in this segment prior to taking the test a second time.

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