

CHECKOUT

**A Life on
the Tills**

**ANNA
SAM**



'The unsung heroines of the food chain are suddenly in the spotlight thanks to till tapper Anna Sam.' ***The Sun***

CHECKOUT
A LIFE ON THE TILLS

ANNA SAM

Translated by Morag Young



*For my brother, Gwenael. I wish I could have shared this book with you.
And for all those men and women who have worked on the till.*

Title Page

Dedication

My name is Anna.

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF RETAIL – AND YOUR DREAM JOB

THE TOP 3 QUESTIONS ASKED AT THE TILL

AN HAUTE COUTURE FASHION SHOW

CASHING UP: THE SEARCH FOR THE MISSING COIN

THE JOB INTERVIEW

YOURS STATISTICALLY

‘HANG ON A MINUTE, I’M AT THE CHECKOUT!’

ENTERTAINING THE SUPERMARKET

I’VE SAVED A PLACE

KISSING COUPLES

‘EMBARRASSING’ ITEMS

I’M HUNGRY!

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE – A VERITABLE GOLD MINE!

THE WONDERFUL LOYALTY CARD IN ALL ITS COMPLICATED SIMPLICITY

CLOSING TIME AND OPENING TIME – WHAT FUN!

WHAT A COMEDIAN

A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY

SIT DOWN IF YOU CAN

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

I’M THE BOSS!

YOUR CONVEYOR BELT: FRIEND OR FOE?

HOW TO HIDE YOUR FORTUNE

I’M PAYING

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

CHECKOUT GIRLS: THE FAIRER SEX

‘YOUR TILL IS ON A BREAK’

DO YOU HAVE 10 ITEMS OR LESS?

PRIORITY? DID YOU SAY PRIORITY?

CAN I SEE SOME ID PLEASE?

BLESS YOU!

£19.99 PLEASE!

MY TILL, MY LOVE

GAME OVER

DID YOU SAY BAR CODES?

STRANGELY STICKY

DRUNK CUSTOMERS

THERE WILL BE BLOOD!

J’ACCUSE

CAN YOU GO TO THE NEXT TILL PLEASE?

WILL IT SCAN OR WON'T IT? THE SIX STEPS FOR GETTING PRICES

ROLL UP, ROLL UP: IT'S SALE TIME

THE WEEKEND SHOW

THE BIG CHRISTMAS RUSH

COUNTDOWN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MURDER ON THE EIFFEL TOWER

THE PÈRE-LACHAISE MYSTERY

THE MONTMARTRE INVESTIGATION

CHECKOUT A LIFE ON THE TILLS

Copyright

My name is Anna. I'm twenty-eight years old with a degree in literature and a life story that is both completely ordinary and a little bit unusual. I've worked for eight years in a supermarket. I started there just to fund my studies and to have some financial independence. But when I couldn't find any work using my degree, I stayed on and became that stalwart of modern life, a checkout girl.

The till. Not a great conversationalist, unless you count the beeps it gives when you scan the produce. As a result of listening to that robotic noise I felt frankly that I was becoming a little like a robot myself. The fleeting interaction with the customers was not enough to make me feel human. Happily though, contact with my colleagues did just that.

One day I decided to write about my working life and record the little incidents that fill the day of a checkout girl. Suddenly I was looking differently at the customers filing past my till. I was seeing the world of retail with new eyes and discovering that it was a lot more varied than I had thought. There are the easy customers and the more challenging ones. Rich ones, poor ones. Nervous customers and boastful customers. Customers who treat you as if you were invisible and customers who say hello. The ones who are always champing at the bit for the store to open, and the ones who always come just as the store is closing. There are customers who flirt with you and customers who insult you. What does nothing happen in the life of a cashier?

I wanted to share my experiences. I have put together here a few of my stories, the ones that affected me most. So it's time to take your trolley and come into the supermarket. Look, the shutters are already going up!

Happy shopping!

~~WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF RETAIL – AND YOUR DREAM JOB~~

Congratulations! You've finally managed to get an interview and actually been hired. Welcome to the retail family. You are now a checkout girl ... sorry, checkout *operator*. That feels much more important, doesn't it?

The interview only lasted a couple of minutes, long enough for you to repeat what's already on your CV and give them your bank details. No IQ tests? Or a bit of mental arithmetic? Come off it! You'll be suggesting they analyse your handwriting next. You're going to work on the till, you know, not being called to the Bar.

It's only your first day – but you still have to prove your worth. So let's get cracking, time for training. Don't worry though – an 'old hand' will take you under her wing for at least, I don't know, a quarter of an hour? A morning if you're lucky. Or two days if your manager is nice. There are some nice managers, I promise. It's just the luck of the draw.

Let's start with a tour of the store. It won't take long (and besides there are other things to be getting on with). There's only the locker room, the staff room, the waste disposal area with the bin where all the produce that's past its sell-by date ends up – you'll find you spend a lot of time here – the Office where you'll be given your float and ... well, that's it.

Now you know enough about the store to get down to work. You'll have plenty of time to explore your new workplace further during your breaks. It will make them more fun.

The first time you approach the tills in your wonderful Chanel or Dior uniform, or your hideous overall (depending on the store and the kind of customers they want to attract) with your float under your arm (the equivalent of several days' salary no less) you are bound to feel a bit intimidated. Take a deep breath. That feeling will pass.

Right, you've found your till, organised your float and settled in. You're really concentrating and really motivated. The 'old hand' is beside you and you're all ears. You're ready to work. Not a moment too soon.

The main things to remember are: scan the items (with a quick glance to check that the price looks right), add up the total, tell the customer, ask for a loyalty card, take payment, give the customer the change, ask for ID if necessary and give them the receipt. All with a nice sincere smile. Of course. And then 'Thank-you-have-a-nice-day' and on to the next customer. Shall I go through it again?

To begin with it might seem that you have to work fast, too fast – especially if you start on a busy day. But it'll soon become automatic and you won't pay too much attention to what you're doing. Within a month it will be as if you and your till were one.

Time has flown by and the 'old hand' is already giving you less and less advice. It's all sinking in. You're becoming expert at scanning items and giving change. Well done! It's really not that complicated – you just need to know what to do when and the rest comes of its own accord.

Right, now the 'old hand' is leaving you to manage on your own. You'll be able to scan your first items independently. Hurrah! What a treat that will be.

Actually, apart from the *bee-eep* of the scanner, it's not very exciting ... fortunately there's lots of interaction with customers (but be patient, more on that later).

Oh yes, I almost forgot. There's a part that's not that easy but, strangely, it's quite interesting. You

have to learn all the code numbers by heart for items that are sold by the unit: lemons, peppers, garlic, artichokes, etc. Don't panic. There aren't that many and if you forget there is a prompt sheet on the wall till. And you can always ask your colleagues, Jessica, Emma, Kate, Sarah, who are never far away. Best not forget their names – not easy when you have about a hundred colleagues.

Your first day is almost over. The last customers are leaving and the store is closing. So what are your first impressions? Actually, it's quite a fun job. You scan lots of items (and discover things you didn't know how to use or even existed), you chat with people, you have pleasant colleagues, you listen to music all day and it's nice and warm.

A dream job. Well, almost. You have to come back and do it all again tomorrow. And the day after. And the day after that. And, as time goes by, getting up in the morning to go to your dream job won't be quite so appealing.

Believe me.

THE TOP 3 QUESTIONS ASKED AT THE TILL

Pay attention please. This store's exclusive welcome gift to you is a set of the top three customer questions:

- 'Where are the toilets?'
- 'Don't you have any bags?'
- 'Are you open?'

Out of context they're not so bad. But wait until you're behind your till. By the end of the day the questions will make you want to commit an act of violence (or, at the very least, have a good scream). Judge for yourself.

The most urgent question: 'Where are the toilets?'

CUSTOMER (*rushing up and usually quite flustered*)
Where are the toilets?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*obliged to interrupt her conversation with another customer*)
Hello!

The customer does not reply.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*sighing but only inwardly*)
Over there.

And she points at the big glossy sign saying 'Toilets' hanging just opposite the tills. The customer rushes off. No 'thank you' or 'goodbye' or even 'damn it'. Takes too long. When you've got to go ...

The most aggressive question: 'Don't you have any bags?'

One of this millennium's greatest revolutions is the disappearance of the complimentary plastic bags offered to customers by supermarkets. Some people find this very irritating, especially the first time they come across it. They see it as a money-making scam. Their reasoning is as follows: 'If the store doesn't provide free bags any more, they can sell them to customers and boost their profits.' This thought had occurred to me too. But I also have the urge to say to my customers, 'Think about the future and all the beautiful countryside there will be without plastic. Isn't the sea a nicer place without bags floating in it?'

Now the disappearance of plastic bags is pretty much accepted. You no longer see irritated customers abandoning their overflowing trolleys at the till. Yes, that did used to happen. But you might still be lucky enough to experience the following:

CHECKOUT GIRL (*who has scanned the customer's three items*)

£2.56 please.

The customer pays by cheque (yes, really – he doesn't have any cash, you see).

CUSTOMER (*who is looking about at the end of the conveyor belt for bags for his pre-packaged tomatoes, his pre-packaged salad and his pre-packaged apples*) Don't you have any bags?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*for the thirtieth time in less than two hours*)

Supermarkets don't provide plastic bags any more. There are boxes in the storeroom or we have recyclable bags for 10p, which can be exchanged when they wear out.

CUSTOMER (*furious, his eyes almost popping out of his head*)

Couldn't you have told me before I paid?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*sighing deeply but again only inwardly*) Sorry, but we haven't provided bags for several months now. (*Smiling at the customer*) Why don't you just carry your shopping as it is? Everything is already wrapped in plastic.

Even more furious, the customer takes his apples and his salad ... and departs minus his tomatoes. After all, he only has two hands.

The most annoying question: 'Are you open?'

So you aim to be the best, most polite, and friendliest checkout girl? OK, that's your right and it's very admirable (although don't forget how little you're paid). But promise me that you will never let anyone address you as if you were your till. You are a human being, not a machine that beeps. It's not only customers who have rights. Here are a few suggestions as to how to deal with confused customers:

CUSTOMER

Are you open?

THE POLITE CHECKOUT GIRL

I'm not but my till is.

THE SARCASTIC CHECKOUT GIRL

Beeeeeeep!

(*If the customer is really good-looking*)

Try me and see ...

THE CHECKOUT GIRL WITH HER BEST SMILE

Are you?

I can't guarantee what reaction you'll get to any of the above.

Over time, you'll find that some customers vary the question:

- 'Are you closed?'
- 'Is she open?'
- 'Are you available?'
- 'Can I come over to you?'

It's up to you how you interpret them ...

Do you care about your appearance? Do you hate uniforms? I'm sorry to have to remind you then that even though checkout girls sit behind tills, that is not enough to identify them as checkout girls and so to avoid any confusion, you have to wear a uniform. Anyway, how else would you feel like you were part of a big family, the big brand family of the chain you work for? Your uniform is essential if you are to give of your best.

Here are the various spring/summer/autumn/winter collections that await you.

The glamorous uniform

A suit with a skirt (generally navy blue) and flowery scarf (*tastefully* poking out of the pocket of your jacket). Flat shoes to match your shirt (generally white) and to be bought with your own money. Do you dream of being an air hostess when you were little? If so, this outfit will make you feel your dream has been fulfilled. A budget airline though, I hope that's OK. You could also use it for a wedding, bar mitzvah or award ceremony (delete as necessary). Isn't life great?

Watch out though, don't make any abrupt movements. The stitches (made in China) are fragile and frankly the clothes aren't very well cut.

The grandma uniform

Do you need something to wear to put the bin out? Now you have just the thing, thanks to the wonderful shapeless black waistcoats and skirts or black pleated trousers size XXL. Even if you're only in your twenties, beware the attentions of the elderly. If you're hoping to attract customers under seventy, however, forget it, there's no chance. Oh and don't forget to have your knitting ready to complete the outfit.

Your queue will be the spiritual home of grannies.

The farmer's wife

This consists of an extra-large overall (colour ranging from electric blue to piglet pink) with popper buttons. Whether you're pregnant or not, people will assume you're eight months gone (or, if you're a man, that you're obese). Completely stain- and waterproof, so invaluable when it rains.

The clown costume

This one has a bright-red jacket over a shirt of a vile green, patterned with large flowers, and wide trousers of an indefinable colour. All that's missing for the Ronald McDonald look is the red nose. The customers certainly won't miss you. But you'll hope your friends will, so don't encourage them to stop by – you'll never hear the end of it.

The cheap uniform

Here we have a polo shirt, sleeveless waistcoat or T-shirt, made in Taiwan, and vaguely in the chain colours (before washing, that is). This garb is worn by all employees of the store, regardless of the role. The stores that favour this style are experts at saving the pennies. Better hope it's one of the stores that offers you a job. Besides, of all the options, you will look slightly less ridiculous in this one than in the others. I won't go any further than that. And the feeling of belonging to a big family will be even more pronounced.

Just to complete the fashion show, be aware that if you arrive at a bad time of year you might have a mix of styles and find yourself wearing the Glamour/Clown, the Grandma/Farmer's Wife or the Clown/Grandma ... Won't that be hilarious?

In any event, avoid looking at yourself too often in the mirror at work if you don't want to have a breakdown or be forced to resist the urge to laugh like a madman in front of every customer.

It is 9.05 p.m. That was your first real day. You have just served your last and 289th customer. You've been behind the till for eight hours with two fifteen-minute breaks. You're tired. You dream of one thing – going to bed and sleeping until 6 a.m. tomorrow.

Oi, wake up! The day isn't over yet!

You still have to clean your work station (you weren't naïve enough to think that a cleaner was going to do it for you, were you?) and cash up (you didn't have the cheek to think that you were being paid to do nothing, did you?). Count yourself lucky, at least here you don't have to clean the aisles.

Right, hurry up, over to the Office with your cash box!

Sit down over there with your colleagues and find a pen and paper. Don't yawn, you haven't finished work yet! Start by counting your coins, then your notes and finally your coin rolls. I say 'your' but obviously they're not really yours. Oh actually, count them in whatever order you please, you still have the right to make that choice. Don't let yourself be distracted by the chatter, the door opening and closing and the rattling of coins. Concentrate or you'll regret it when you find yourself with the joy of recounting.

Not enough light? Don't complain, think of it as a relaxing soft light after the blinding glare of the store.

15 minutes later

OK, you have scrupulously noted how many 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p and 50p pieces, and £1 and £2 coins you have. And the number of £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes. And the number of coin rolls ... Calm down now. Yes, you have a small fortune in your hands. But don't think about that. Instead, think about your salary at the end of the month. That will bring you back down to earth again ...

Add it all up and then subtract your till float (yes, the £150 in cash that was in your cash box at the start of the day).

'Right, 173, how much? 173?! Yes, that's you!'

'I have a name!'

'Yes, I know, but it's quicker this way. So, 173?'

'£3,678.65!'

'Count again, 173, you've made a mistake! I warned you. You weren't concentrating properly.'

'Am I way out? Or just a little? Under? Over?'

'Just count it again.'

10 minutes later

'£3,678.15!'

'OK. Before you go, check that your cheques and discount vouchers are safely put away. We're not touching your skivvies, you know.'

9.35 p.m. You take off your overall in the locker room. You only have five minutes to catch your bus

Good night and sweet dreams (full of *beeeeps*, hellos, goodbyes ... perhaps not).

I've forgotten to mention something very important about your job interview. I'll put that right straight away. It doesn't matter if you have never worked before, you don't know how to count, you are agoraphobic or afraid of the dark as long as you are available immediately, you accept the wonderful salary offered, you have a bank account and you can answer *this* question:

'Why do you want to work with us?'

Yes, even to be a checkout girl, you have to come up with a good reason.

Try one of the following:

'Because I've always dreamt of working in a supermarket!'

If you want them to believe you, say it with a *lot* of conviction and make your eyes sparkle with enthusiasm at the same time. Not easy.

'Because my mother was a checkout girl!'

Same conviction and enthusiasm required as for the previous suggestion.

'Because like you I want to "make life taste better".' or 'Because, as you say, "Every little helps!"'

Stretching it a little, I know, but such devotion is always well received. So you might as well. You have to be careful though. Not all the slogans work. You might be wary of passing yourself off as 'Everyone's favourite ingredient'.

'I'm a student. I need a part-time job to support myself.'

The classic answer but very convincing. And managers really like students. They grumble less than old people and don't mind working at weekends. So it's an excellent answer. Of course, if you're not actually a student you have to look young enough to be credible. You shouldn't have too much of a problem up to the age of thirty or thirty-five.

'I need a job to survive.'

Avoid this answer – even if it's true, the manager will think you're 'not very motivated', 'lacking team spirit', 'unsuited to the store's commercial ambitions' and your application risks being relegated to the bottom of the pile (which is enormous, by the way).

But there are many answers that will impress. For inspiration pretend that you're applying to be a lawyer, instead of a checkout operator. Come on, use your imagination!

Here are a few things to ponder if you are to be an unbeatable checkout girl:

- About 750,000 people work for super markets in the UK (you'll be joining a nice big family!).
- 15–20 items must be scanned every minute. This can increase to 45 at some discount chains. So the checkout girl has to handle customers' shopping without proper consideration, leading to damaged goods if customers can't keep up with the pace, which, of course, is nearly always the case. Well, they're not paid according to their performance – but neither is the checkout girl actually ...
- 700 to 800 items scanned per hour.
- 21,000 to 24,000 items scanned per week.
- 800 kg of goods are lifted per hour (more than this on good days).
- 96 to 120 tonnes lifted per week (the equivalent of four HGVs!).
- Per year? Get out your calculator (not provided by your store).

Do I look like a bodybuilder? Well, hardly. Quite often I feel about seventy.

Every week you can consult the checkout-operator league table to find out who has taken the most money and whether you have been a tortoise or a hare. Don't panic. There's no reward (not even a bottle of ketchup) for the winner. But your parents and children will be really proud of you.

Every day you will say on average:

- 250 hellos
- 250 goodbyes
- 500 thank yous
- 200 'Do you have a loyalty card?'
- 70 'Please enter your PIN'
- 70 'Please take your card'
- 30 'The toilets are over there'

and many other similarly poetic lines.

You're not a robot, are you? Of course not! A robot doesn't smile.

- Your average monthly pay: £800 net.
- Hours worked a week: 30 (or 26, 24, 20 but rarely the full 35).

But let's get one thing straight. Don't think you'll be able to top up your hours with part-time work. Your manager will ensure that your rota will change every week. Of course you could always work as a cleaner from 5 a.m. until 8 a.m. or take in ironing. You didn't want any time for family, did you? Well done, you've chosen the ideal job.

Here's an example of a 30-hour week:

- Monday: 9 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. (working time: 5½ hours; break time: 16 minutes)

- Tuesday: rest day
- Wednesday: 3 p.m. to 8.45 p.m. (working time: 5 hours 45 minutes; break time: 17 minutes)
- Thursday: 1.45 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. (working time: 3½ hours; break time: 10 minutes)
- Friday: 3.15 p.m. to 9 p.m. (working time: 5 hours 45 minutes; break time: 17 minutes)
- Saturday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m./3.30 p.m. to 9.15 p.m. (working time: 9 hours 45 minutes; break time: 17 minutes and 17 minutes)

And the following week? Don't worry, your hours will be completely different.

You'll be told your new schedule two weeks in advance, three weeks in advance if the person who creates the rota is particularly zealous, or twenty-four hours in advance if a lot of cashiers are away.

Six hours fifteen minutes is the maximum number of hours you can work on the till without a break (in theory, although some employment contracts contravene this).

You're entitled to three break minutes per hour worked, so if you want eighteen minutes to eat, you need to have worked at least six hours. You can forget about nice hot meals.

So there you have it. That's your dream job ... is it all you hoped for? You have the supermarkets to thank for that.

~~'HANG ON A MINUTE, I'M AT THE CHECKOUT!'~~

Ah, mobile phones. What a marvellous invention. It's just incredible all the things they can do: play music, show TV, send emails, follow the stock market ... Incidentally they also enable us to make calls when and where we want. But that's not all mobile phones can do. Some can even make a man (or a woman) invisible – and it's not only the most expensive models that can do it. The fact that checkout girls are pretty invisible anyway, helps with this trick.

CUSTOMER (*on the phone, talking loudly as if he were on his own at home*)

But I'm already at the till! Couldn't you have told me earlier that you wanted bananas?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*very loudly to remind him that he is at the till and not at home*)

Hello!

CUSTOMER (*apparently he still thinks he's at home*)

Go out tonight? Are you feeling better then?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*who has worked fast so that he soon will be at home*)

£13.50 please.

CUSTOMER (*collecting his shopping with one hand and not moving fast at all*)

I'm sure it's a stomach bug. I hope you haven't given it to me. I don't want to spend all night on the loo.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*getting up from her chair, clearing her throat, and speaking very loudly indeed*)

£13.50 please!

CUSTOMER (*with a quick glance at the checkout girl but continuing calmly to collect his shopping*)

... you're the one who never listens to me. You should wash your hands every time you go out.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*clenching her fists and speaking really, really loudly*)

Do you have a loyalty card?

CUSTOMER (*inserting his bank card into the machine without glancing up*)

... I get it, I'm not deaf. You're so grumpy when you're ill.

The customer grabs the receipt from the checkout girl's hand as if she were a ticket machine.

CUSTOMER (*moving away with his shopping, still on the phone and still talking loudly*)

... It's a good thing everyone's not like you.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*really loudly but only in her head*)

And it's a good thing everyone's not like you. What an idiot!

And she decides not to bother with a goodbye. Every small victory counts.

Don't feel sorry for yourself. You've just had an unforgettable experience – for a few minutes you have been completely invisible. And look on the bright side; you might get to experience the same thing again but with a subtle difference.

CUSTOMER (*on the phone*)

Blah blah blah ...

CHECKOUT GIRL

Hello!

CUSTOMER (*looking at the checkout girl*)

Hello. (*And eyes immediately focusing elsewhere*) So, as I was saying ... blah blah blah ...

I'm not exaggerating.

But there really is a reason to look on the bright side. It's not impossible that you will come across this rare specimen:

CUSTOMER (*on the phone*)

I'll call you back, I'm at the till.

The customer hangs up and puts his phone away.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*with a really big, sincere smile*)

Hello!

CUSTOMER (*returning her smile*)

Hello!

Isn't life great? Well yes, but don't get carried away. That kind of customer is very, very, very rare. People who have met them still talk about it ...

Now, if you are particularly sensitive about appearing invisible and this is your second year behind the till (surely you're used to it by now?!) you might want to do this instead:

CUSTOMER (*on the phone*)

Blah blah blah ...

CHECKOUT GIRL (*scanning products quickly while ... talking on her hands-free kit*)

Blah blah blah ...

CUSTOMER (*looking at the checkout girl*)

Don't you have any bags?

CHECKOUT GIRL (*without glancing at the customer*)

No. (*And immediately*) As I was saying, blah blahblah ...

In your dreams – no, not even in your dreams. A checkout girl must always act like a checkout girl. And a checkout girl does not use the phone at work! At least not until computers have replaced her entirely. Some customers appear to think they already have.

Another job which is almost as desirable as yours is the supermarket compere's. This strange specimen is wheeled out on very special occasions: Mother's Day, Grandparents' Day, Gardening Day, Green Plants Day, the First Day of Spring, the First Day of Summer, the First Day of Winter, Red Wine Day, White Wine Day, Beer Day, Pork Pie Day, Scotch Egg Day, Salmon Day, Chocolate Cake Day, etc. You'll soon learn that any occasion is a good excuse for a party. And on those days how you will regret not being a customer. All those special offers and presents galore you will miss out on ...

And you will very soon realise that not just anyone can be a supermarket compere.

You need a nice voice (well, a voice) and a *lot* of endurance. Supermarket comperes have to be able to talk into their microphone almost all day without stopping (which will rapidly make you detest them).

They also have to be convincing.

COMPERE (*into the microphone*)

Ladies and gentlemen, today we have a wonderful, magnificent, sublime, gigantic special offer: buy two sausages and get the third free! Wonderful value if you're planning a superb, magnificent family barbecue!

And they must be good at the schmaltz.

COMPERE

... Ah, a family barbecue ... What could be nicer than a family barbecue? What could be more touching? So don't forget, tomorrow is Mother's Day. Do something nice for Mum! For only £2.54!

They must enjoy travel.

COMPERE

I am currently in the bread-products aisle. Come and join me as we taste French pastries, lovingly made by artisans: *croissants*, *pains au chocolat*, *pains aux raisins*, just some of their specialities!

They have to have the charm of Chris Tarrant (generally they think they *are* Chris Tarrant).

COMPERE (*to a customer*)

So, madam, what is the capital of France? Paris, Berlin or Madrid? The right answer will win you this wonderful, amazing, magnificent barometer ...

COMPERE

Um, I don't know.

COMPERE

Do you want to phone a friend? (*The compere laughs heartily as he says this – comperes also need a sense of humour.*)

CUSTOMER
OK.

COMPERE
OK, I'm your friend. Here's a clue: it starts with 'P'.

CUSTOMER
Peterborough!

COMPERE (*surprised*)
Uh ... no. The answer was Paris. But never mind, madam. Since it's Mother's Day tomorrow, you win this wonderful, amazing, magnificent bouquet of flowers!

And finally they need to be resourceful.

COMPERE (*into the microphone*)
Little Johnny has lost his mum and dad. Could they come quickly to the pet-food aisle. Their little boy really needs to go to the loo!

So you see, it's true. Not everyone has the skills to be a supermarket compere. You will come to admire them for their ability to make so much of so little. It's a highwire act!

Hats (and microphones) off to them.

Some people have a real phobia about queuing. But how can you avoid it at the supermarket, or the post office for that matter? With subtle little ploys, that's how. Here are the most devious.

Tactic 1

DEVIOUS CUSTOMER (*running up with four items in his hand*)

Are you open?

CHECKOUT GIRL

I'm not but my till is! Hello!

DEVIOUS CUSTOMER

Excellent!

The customer's four items are scanned.

CHECKOUT GIRL

£5.45 please.

DEVIOUS CUSTOMER

Hang on, my girlfriend's just coming – she forgot something.

Five minutes later, still no girlfriend in sight and the queue of customers is building up behind him.

CHECKOUT GIRL (*sensing the mounting tension*)

Can I ask you to wait to one side?

DEVIOUS CUSTOMER (*who's oblivious to the tension but is annoyed by the question*)

She's coming! Can't you wait just a second?

And indeed at that moment the checkout girl sees her arrive with ... two baskets filled to the brim.

CUSTOMER BEHIND THE DEVIOUS CUSTOMER

Don't mind me!

The checkout girl privately thinks the waiting customer is right to be aggrieved.

DEVIOUS CUSTOMER

- [Sword Woman and Other Historical Adventures.pdf](#)
- [download online Black, Brown, & Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora here](#)
- [Moss Gardening: Including Lichens, Liverworts, and Other Miniatures online](#)
- [UX for Beginners: A Crash Course in 100 Short Lessons for free](#)

- <http://kamallubana.com/?library/Sword-Woman-and-Other-Historical-Adventures.pdf>
- <http://interactmg.com/ebooks/Cumulus.pdf>
- <http://tuscalaural.com/library/Moss-Gardening--Including-Lichens--Liverworts--and-Other-Miniatures.pdf>
- <http://test1.batsinbelfries.com/ebooks/The-Bascombe-Novels--The-Sportswriter--Independence-Day--The-Lay-of-the-Land--Bascombe--Books-1-3-.pdf>