First Call SOP

Answer the fear, offer a fast check, then give a short to-do list

THE PLAY (ONE LINE)

When a scared customer calls, answer the fear before you sell anything, offer a fast check so they know where they stand, tell them what not to do, and hand them a short, specific to-do list.

Why this matters

Deanna Dickerson, RN, owns The Lice Place in Nashville and Franklin, Tennessee. Most of her callers just got a school note. Her line on that note:

"Please check your child. Nobody has any idea whatsoever how to do that, but please check your child."

A scared customer can't hear your price list. Handle the fear on the first call and, in her words, "these moms can walk in here just with a look of terror on their face, and they walk out happy." This page turns how she runs that call into a script any service business can use.

~5 min	4	1 hand	11 years
for a professional comb check at her clinic	items on her clinic's home to-do list	the times a year she finds a bug on a hairbrush	since she opened the Cool Springs office

Numbers are Deanna's, from the episode. Treat them as her experience, not benchmarks.

The 7 steps

1 LISTEN

Write down the one question every scared caller asks

Deanna's most pressing question from callers: "what do I need to do to my home?" It's the fear behind the call, not price. Find your version and write it at the top of your script.

2 REASSURE

Answer the fear before you sell anything

Ask first-timers if they've dealt with this before. If not, give the reassurance first. Her version: "let me tell you about your environment. It's not that big of a deal. You can relax about it."

3 REFRAME

Tell them which problem they actually have

Callers picture a worse problem. Parents think lice is like bed bugs. Hers: "you can walk in here and get rid of the head lice and be done with it." Name the worse problem, then say why theirs is smaller.

4 CHECK

Offer a short check before anyone spends money

Certainty beats reassurance. Deanna: "we can check in about five minutes and tell you with certainty." She books the slot on the call. Define your small, fast check and book it before you hang up.

5

STOP

Tell them what not to do

Panicked customers spend before they know. Deanna to a mom who wanted to pre-treat: "You know what, don't bother." And: you "don't have to take your house apart board by board." Name 1-2 panic moves and tell them to wait.

6

LIST

Hand over a short, specific to-do list

Her clinic's home list: wash the sheets; combs and brushes in the dishwasher; stuffed animals touched in the last 24 hours in the dryer on high for 20 minutes; vacuum the sofa. Four items, each specific. Keep yours to 4-5.

7

SCRIPT

Write it down so every call sounds the same

(Our suggestion.) Put steps 1-6 on one page by the phone so a new hire or answering service gives the same answer. Add a line every time a caller asks something the script doesn't cover.

Your first-call script (fill in)

Deanna's column is filled from the episode. Write yours in the right column and keep it by the phone.

Step	Deanna's version	Your version
The fear they call with	"What do I need to do to my home?"	
What you say first	Let me tell you about your environment. It's not that big of a deal.	
The worse problem they picture	Bed bugs or fleas	
Your fast check	A comb check in about five minutes, booked today	
What not to do	Don't pre-treat. Don't take the house apart.	
The short to-do list	Sheets, brushes in the dishwasher, 24-hour stuffed animals in the dryer, vacuum the sofa	

Before the next scared call

- [ ] I know the one question scared callers ask first
- [ ] I can name the worse problem they picture
- [ ] I tell callers the 1-2 things not to do
- [ ] The script is on one page by the phone
- [ ] I ask first-timers if they've dealt with this before
- [ ] My fast check is defined and bookable on the call
- [ ] My to-do list is 4-5 specific items
- [ ] New questions get added to the script

This SOP is about running the call. For questions about head lice, contact The Lice Place (theliceplace.com) or your doctor. Full episode recap: unscriptedsmallbusiness.com/deanna-dickerson-lice-place-check-your-child/