

recently had to call my telephone company to talk about a problem with my bill. I got that terrible recorded message: "Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line while we serve the 3,459 other customers who have been waiting even longer than you have."

As I waited in the queue (a synonym for "line," just more difficult to write correctly), I started thinking about the many meanings of the word "line." If a man "hands a girl a line," he's probably trying to get a date with her. You could also say he's "out of line," in which case, a

But let me continue. The lines I want to talk about are ones that we all have to deal with — at the store, in traffic, at the ski lift, at the airport or even in restrooms. We should all be very experienced at waiting in line (or, as New Yorkers say, waiting "on" line).

There's always someone, though, who's even more experienced at not waiting in line — people who think they are privileged or somehow better than the rest of us. Oh, they often have some reason about why they need to stand in front of you. They hand you some line such as: "I was in line before and just left to do the rest of my shop-

ping." Or: "You don't mind, do you? My wife's in the car, about to have a baby, and I need to buy a magazine for the wait."

Others use a different strategy: they pretend not to notice that there's a line. They slowly walk up, look at the people in line to see who's not paying attention, and suddenly they're firmly dug in as if they've been there all along. If you protest, they confront you with a glassy stare. Your blood starts to boil and words that aren't allowed on prime-time television begin rolling off your tongue. But the glassy stare continues. The nerve! Can they not hear you because of that thing in their ear connected to some small machine in their pocket — a cell phone or an iPod? Do they not understand English? No, none of the above. The plain and simple truth is: they're ignoring you. It's a talent they've developed with years of practice, helped by their firm belief that they have some special status.

Oh, but wait! Someone from the phone company is now finally on the line. And wouldn't you know? She's trying to hand me some fake line about why those charges on my bill are correct. Lines: they're just never a good thing. ○

"As I waited, I began to think of all the different meanings of the word 'line'"



good friend might "toss her a line." In this sense, "line" means "rope," so the good friend is trying to help her get out of a difficult situation. As you see, there's "a fine line" between tossing someone a line and handing her a line. And the "bottom line" is that it's important to understand the difference.

Of course, if she "falls for him hook, line and sinker," then there's no helping her. It would probably be better for her if she got involved with some guy who can "toe the line" and who is more likely to "stay in line."

On the other hand, a lot of women are attracted to men who they believe "color outside the lines," since this is viewed as a sign of creativity. And if all this has you wondering what to think, just go "online" to look up the definitions.

<u>bottom line</u> [ˈbɒtəm ˈlaɪn]	Fazit
<u>cell phone</u> [ˈsel fəʊn] US	Mobiletelefon
<u>color outside the lines</u> [ˌkɒləraʊt,saɪd ðə ˈlaɪnz] US	sich unkonventionell verhalten
<u>fake</u> [feɪk]	hier: verlogen
<u>fall for sb. hook, line and sinker</u>	sich rettungslos in jmdn.
[ˌfɔːl fɔːr ˌsʌmbədi ˌhʊk ˌlaɪn ænd ˈsɪŋkər] <i>ifml.</i>	verlieben
<u>fine line</u> [ˌfaɪn ˈlaɪn]	feiner Unterschied
<u>glassy</u> [ˈglɑːsi]	glasig
<u>hand sb. a line</u> [hænd ˌsʌmbədi ə ˈlaɪn] <i>ifml.</i>	jmdn. anquatschen
<u>out of line: be ~</u> [aʊt əv ˈlaɪn]	etw. Unangemessenes sagen
<u>prime-time television</u> [ˌpraɪm taɪm ˈtɛləvɪʒən]	Fernsehen zur Hauptsendezeit
<u>queue</u> [kjuː] UK	Warteschlange
<u>recorded message</u> [rɪˌkɔːrdɪd ˈmesɪdʒ]	automatische Ansage
<u>restroom</u> [ˈrestruːm] US	Toilette
<u>rope</u> [rəʊp]	Seil
<u>stare</u> [steə]	Blick
<u>stay in line</u> [steɪ ɪn ˈlaɪn]	nicht aus der Reihe tanzen
<u>The nerve!</u> [ðə ˈnɜːv]	So eine Frechheit!
<u>toe the line</u> [ˌtuː ðə ˈlaɪn]	sich einordnen
<u>toss sb. a line</u> [ˌtɔːs ˌsʌmbədi ə ˈlaɪn]	jmdm. eine (Rettungs)Leine zuwerfen
<u>wait in line</u> [weɪt ɪn ˈlaɪn]	Schlange stehen

For an audio on the language in this article.