

Good Service Awards 2015 – A Personal Top 6



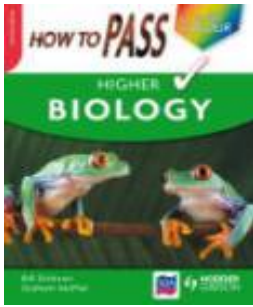
Online shopping is here to stay – why drag yourself out in the winter weather when you can sort your Christmas list with the click of a button?

Good service, that's why! If the person who takes your credit card does so with a smile, if they're polite and friendly – and prepared to spend a bit of time helping you to find what you want (and in the case of me and electronics, explaining how on earth it works...) I bet you come away with a much warmer glow than a website can give you. We're human, we like interaction, and no, those 'ask me' options that some online sellers try to fool us with are *not* real people – try asking them something that's not in their pre-programmed script and see what happens...

So here are my very personal awards for top service in Edinburgh this year:

6 Blackwell's





Bookshops are really up against it these days; you can buy any book without having to move from your sofa, and there are no worries about whether it will fit you or you'll like the colour. Why do I still shop at Blackwell's then? Because the staff really know their stuff and the shop makes a huge effort to arrange author events, book launches and reading groups. I reserve my greatest praise for the people in the **academic books department** on the first floor – they are fantastic!

If you're the parent of a school-age child, you'll probably know the misery of finding the right textbooks, how-to-pass guides and revision aides; old exam papers in particular are a minefield, especially when the format seems to change every year. Blackwell's staff will spend ages making sure you've got the right edition of the right material – and they do it all with a smile. Blackwell's won **The Bookseller 2014 Book Retailer of the Year Award**.

Blackwell's, 53-62 South Bridge; open 9am-8pm Monday to

Friday, 9am-6pm Saturdays, 12 noon-6pm Sundays.

5 John Lewis



Well, I can hardly leave them out... I *know* I'm their classic customer, I *know* they probably wish we were all a bit younger and hipper – but the joy of John Lewis staff is that they never make you feel that way.

I would never buy white goods or computers of any kind from anywhere else; only their staff will take time to explain it all, only their staff don't try to blind you with techno-speak, and only they give you a two year guarantee as

standard. There are a few things I'd like to change in the Edinburgh shop – the chaotic restaurant for one (bring back the lovely Espresso Bar!) – but John Lewis staff are wonderful and deserve every profit share they get in my opinion. So there.

John Lewis, St James's Centre; opening hours are extended over the Christmas and New Year period – click [here](#) for details.

So which are your favourites? Which shops make you feel special – even if all you're buying is a bar of chocolate? We're always looking for great places to shop, so do let us know where you've found great service in the city.

4 Maplin



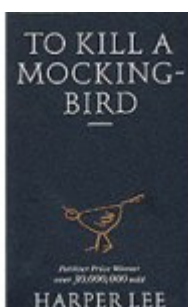


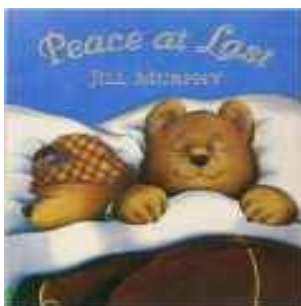
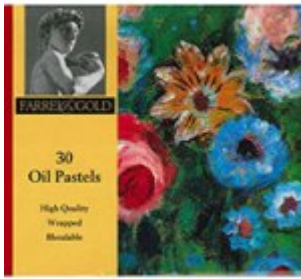
I am no lover of DIY or computer shops and I haven't the first idea what half the gadgets in Maplins are for – but every single time I go there, whether it's for a mouse or a roll of masking tape, the staff are unfailingly jolly and helpful.

I'm sure they know as well as I do that they could sell me any old thing – but they don't, they go out of their way to find what I need, and to find the best bargain. I've even been told at the till that the batteries I've chosen are on a 2 for 1 deal – and the cashier has gone back and collected the second packet for me. Excellent for anything from hard drives to drones, cables to CCTV – and, for the child who has everything, they've even got ride-on sports cars. Free delivery on orders over £10 and a one year guarantee.

Maplin, 118-126 Dalry Road; open 8.30am-8pm Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm Saturdays, 10am-6pm Sundays.

3 The Works





The staff in The Works are models of patience and self-control. Located as it is in the middle of Princes Street, this shop attracts not only people in search of good book bargains – it's also a magnet for tourists asking directions, folk wanting change for the bus and confused shoppers looking for things no bookshop would ever have, yet the staff remain friendly and helpful at all times.

Although the stock changes with alarming frequency, they go out of their way to look for anything you want, or even think you *might* have seen three weeks ago... Excellent for discounted

books, very well priced art and crafts supplies, jigsaws, souvenirs *and* that essential item of festival wear, the waterproof poncho.

The Works, 63 Princes Street; open 8.30am-9pm Monday to Sunday.

2 Fopp



I love Fopp because it's a bit like a library; you can browse through all the DVDs and CDs and come across all sorts of things you've never heard of – the documentary and foreign films sections are especially fascinating.

The prices are usually comparable to – and sometimes lower than – online sites. I also like Fopp because the staff are genuinely interested in what they're selling and know where even the most esoteric film can be found; they're friendly too, regardless of whether you're a highly informed film buff

or someone who remembers something they saw on TV 40+ years ago and fancies wallowing in nostalgia... I'm in the former category of course – that copy of *Children's Favourites of the 1960s* was 'For a Friend'.

Fopp, 3-15 Rose Street; open 9am-6pm daily but with extended hours in December – click [here](#) for details.

And finally...

1 Hex Mobiles *WINNER!*



I will normally do almost anything to avoid entering a phone shop. The big names fill me with fury as soon as I walk through their doors (and it's clear I fill their staff with disappointment as soon as they realise I'm not up for a fzillion per month contract deal on the latest 'must-have' gadget).

Hex Mobiles are different; they repair phones and computers

and they do it without treating you like a second class citizen – amazing! The staff always tell you what's what in plain English – innovatory!

Everyone who has ever served me in this place has been helpful; they tell you when it's not worth repairing something, they give you a written quote for any repair they can undertake, and they carry lots of spare parts (including chargers), phone cases, etc, so they can often complete the work in one day. I even forgot my purse once and although they had already put my purchases through the till, they happily held on to them while I went home and retrieved my credit card. You don't need to take my word for it – Hex has just been named **2015 Technology Retailer of the Year** at the **Scottish Independent Retail Awards**. Take yourself to Tollcross and take the phobia out of phone repairs.

Hex Mobiles, 14 Home Street; open 9am-6pm Monday to Saturday, 11am-4pm Sundays.

