

# Dealing with Angry Customers



## 1 Warm Up Work with a partner.

- Have you ever complained to a company?

## 2 Conversation Read and fill in the spaces.

Which words do you think are missing? Choose from the list on the right.

**RESOLVE**

**POLICY**

**SORRY**

**SPEAK**

**Call Centre:** Good morning. ABC Broadband Service.

**Bryan:** Ah hello there. I want to speak to someone about the terrible experience I'm having with your company.

**Call Centre:** OK. Well, I'm <sup>1</sup>..... that you're not happy with our service. Could you tell me about the difficulties you've had?

**Bryan:** Well, I've been waiting now for 3 weeks for the broadband to start. Nothing has happened. When I called before, I was told it would be just another 24 hours. But that was a week ago. Why did you **lie** to me?

**Call Centre:** Well, it's certainly not company <sup>2</sup>..... to lie to our customers. I would like to help, so could I have your name and account number?

**Bryan:** It's Bryan Campbell, and my account number is 383442.

**Call Centre:** Thank you, Mr. Campbell. What I'm going to do is <sup>3</sup>..... to our engineering department and see what has happened. I will then call you back this afternoon.

**Bryan:** OK...

**Call Centre:** Can I confirm your number is 020 7946 0477?

**Bryan:** That's right.

**Call Centre:** Good. So, as I say, Mr. Campbell, I'll call you back this afternoon, and I'm sure we'll be able to <sup>4</sup>..... this.

**Bryan:** Thank you.

**Call Centre:** Thank you for calling. Goodbye.

## 3 Summarizing Make brief notes in the box below.

Customer's Complaint(s)

Call Centre's Action(s)

**4 Practice Match the expression to its function.**

- |                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Showing sympathy         | It's [not] company policy to ...    |
| 2) Asking about the problem | I'm sorry you're not happy with ... |
| 3) Explaining policy        | What I'm going to do is ...         |
| 4) Offering to help         | I'd like to help ...                |
| 5) Explaining actions       | Could you tell me about ... ?       |

**5 Practice Use the expressions from exercise four.**

**Scene: You work at a hotel. Read the customer complaints and follow the [cue] to make a response.**

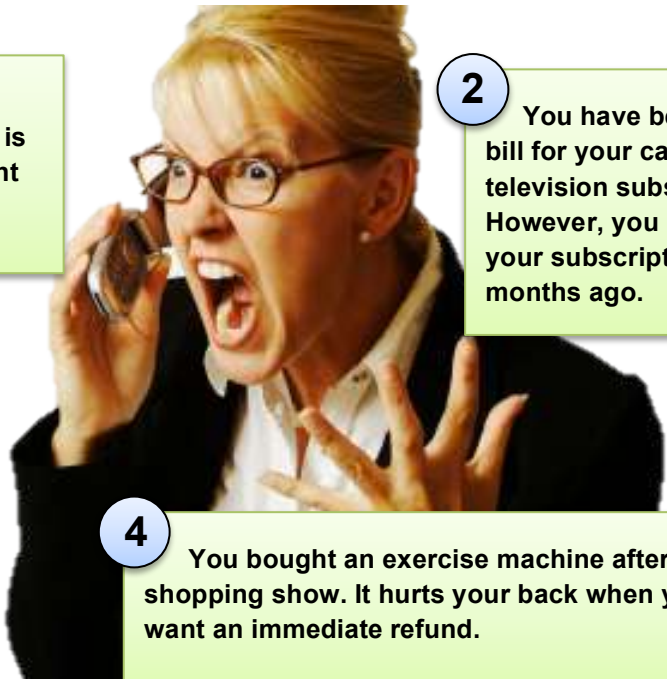
- 1) The room I booked was really small. I was terribly disappointed.  
[show sympathy] .....
- 2) I'm a regular customer at your hotel. Why didn't you give me a free upgrade to a deluxe room?  
[explain policy] .....
- 3) My credit card has been charged twice. Why?  
[explain actions] .....
- 4) I'm trying to make another reservation on your website, but it's not working.  
[offer to help] .....
- 5) I really didn't like the room I was given.  
[ask about the problem] .....

**6 Practice Work with a partner. Role-play the situations below.**

**1** You bought a vase online. When it arrived, you discovered a crack. This is the second time the company has sent damaged goods to you.

**2** You have been sent a bill for your cable television subscription. However, you cancelled your subscription three months ago.

**3** You paid for a new sofa three weeks ago. It still hasn't been delivered. You find it very difficult to get through to the call centre.



**4** You bought an exercise machine after watching a TV shopping show. It hurts your back when you use it. You want an immediate refund.

# Dealing with Angry Customers

## Teaching Notes

<b>Target Structure:</b>	Expressions used to deal with customers
<b>Vocabulary:</b>	Business
<b>Level:</b>	Upper Intermediate / Advanced
<b>Time:</b>	1 hour
<b>Preparation:</b>	None

### Suggested Teaching Method

**This worksheet looks at expressions used by companies when dealing with dissatisfied customers. There is an extended conversation, practice exercises and the opportunity to role-play different scenarios.**

- ➊ Give one worksheet to each student. Students should ask their partner the opening question. Elicit a couple of answers from the group.
- ➋ Follow the instructions. Students should first read the conversation, and fill in the blanks with a word on the right.  
After students have checked in pairs, go through the answers, and have students practise the conversation in pairs. Encourage the students to look up and make eye contact with each other when speaking.
- ➌ Have students work in pairs. They only need to write brief notes. Go through the answers with the group. You may also wish to assist with any pressing vocabulary questions.
- ➍ Students can work alone and check in pairs. Go through the answers with the group.
- ➎ Students need to make sentences using the phrases from exercise four. Elicit the first answer as an example. Accept anything that is grammatically correct and makes sense.
- ➏ Assign pairs. Have students read through the four role-play scenarios. Explain that one person will represent the company. This could be a call-centre scenario (as in the original conversation) or face-to-face.

Encourage the use of the expressions students have just studied. Students may need to give out an address and phone number. Point out that these details do not need to be real.

Have students switch roles regularly. Monitor, and make notes on errors in your students' conversations. You can go through the errors later, eliciting correction.

You could follow this exercise up by having students devise their own scenarios. Your students could also write out an example conversation as homework.

You could finish the lesson with discussion questions.

- What things do people complain about?
- Do people in your country tend to complain if something is bad?
- Do you deal with customers as part of your job? Do you enjoy it?
- Do you think it's tough working in a call centre?

**Answer Key****2**

- 1) sorry
- 2) policy
- 3) speak
- 4) resolve

**3**

Customer's Complaints: He has been waiting for three weeks for his broadband to start. He called customer service one week ago, and was told it would begin in 24 hours. It didn't.

Call Centre's Actions: They will speak to the engineering department, and call the customer back in the afternoon.

**4**

- |                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Showing sympathy         | I'm sorry you're not happy with ... |
| 2) Asking about the problem | Could you tell me about ...         |
| 3) Explaining policy        | It's [not] company policy to ...    |
| 4) Offering to help         | I'd like to help ...                |
| 5) Explaining actions       | What I'm going to do is ...         |

**5**

- 1) I'm sorry you were not happy with the room you booked.
- 2) I'm afraid that it's not company policy to automatically upgrade customers for free.
- 3) What I'm going to do is check our records. Could I have your name please?
- 4) I'd like to help. Would you like me to take the reservation over the phone?
- 5) Could you tell me what problems you experienced with the room?

**Additional Ideas**

We'd be pleased to hear some feedback on our worksheets. Tell us how it went in your class. You can send us feedback from [www.handoutsonline.com](http://www.handoutsonline.com).

Alternatively, you can email the editor at [editor@handoutsonline.com](mailto:editor@handoutsonline.com).

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