

## Dealing with problems

### Lesson description

In this lesson you take part in a speaking activity to explain and resolve problems. You will hear two telephone conversations where people explain a problem and try to find a solution. You will practise reporting what someone says and using word stress to highlight important information.

### Aim

Explaining a problem situation and finding a solution.

### Language

Phrases to explain and resolve a problem.

Reported speech.

Contrastive stress.

### Task

The task for this lesson is to role-play a misunderstanding and find a solution to the problem.

### Materials

Handout

Audio 8.1 and 8.2

Role cards

### Suggested running order

Lead-in	Pairs discuss problem situations and suggest solutions.
Input	Listening to some problem situations, identify the problem and how it is resolved.  Listening for specific phrases from the audio.
Language focus	Practice of language to explain and resolve problems.  Focus on and practice of reported speech and contrastive stress.
Task	Pairwork role-plays of five situations to resolve misunderstandings.  Talk about personal experiences.

### Lead-in

- 1 Students work together in groups to discuss the situations and how they would resolve them.  
Oral feedback.

## Input

- 1 ▶8.1 Explain that students are going to hear two telephone conversations in which there is a problem. They should listen and decide what the problems are and how they were resolved.

### Answers

Conversation 1: *The problem is that the flight was booked for 9pm the previous evening. Helen is in the airport at 9am the next day and doesn't have a ticket for the next flight. The solution: Tom is going to phone the travel agent to book a ticket which Helen will pick up at the airport.*

Conversation 2: *The problem is that the room James wanted is being used for a meeting; the secretary booked a room that's too small. The secretary is going to phone the conference centre to book another room.*

- 2 ▶8.1 Play the audio again and get students to complete the sentences.

### Answers

Explaining the problem

- 1 *You told me you **had booked** the flight at 9am.*
- 2 *I **thought you'd** organised everything for today.*
- 3 *You **should've** told me.*
- 4 *The room you said **you'd booked** is being used for another meeting until noon.*
- 5 *But I thought **you had booked** room 306.*

Resolving the problem

- 1 *Well, probably the most **sensible thing** is to try to get another flight.*
- 2 *Or you **could always try** to buy a ticket there. It **would probably** be quicker.*
- 3 *Oh, well what **if I call** the centre and try to get an alternative room?*

## Language focus

- 1 Students work together to rewrite the skeleton sentences in full.

### Answers

- 1 *I thought you didn't want me to buy a present.*
- 2 *What if I jump in a taxi and try to get there as quickly as possible?*
- 3 *Another option is to cancel and rebook for next week.*
- 4 *I thought you decided to have the party tomorrow.*
- 5 *Why don't I wait in the café across the street?*

- 2/3 Use an example from above, e.g. *You told me you had booked the flight at 9am* and elicit it as reported speech. Try to elicit the changes between direct and reported speech and then read through the language box with students. Students then rewrite the sentences in pairs.

### Answers

- 1 *You said you'd booked the biggest room there was.*
- 2 *I thought you said you'd bring the passports.*
- 3 *You told me I didn't need to dress up.*
- 4 *You said you were going to order the flowers online.*
- 5 *You said the driver could pick me up from the airport.*

4 Tell the students that stressing the right words in a sentence is very important to get meaning across. Write on the board:

A: I booked room 305.

B: But I thought you'd booked room 306.

Ask them where the stress should be in B's response and why (on the 6 because this is the crucial information here).

▶8.2 Students then listen to the audio, underline the stresses and repeat the sentence.

5 Students work in pairs and mark where the stress falls in the sentences. After correcting, they practise in pairs.

### Answers

1 I asked you to book a room for **20** people. Room 305 is too **small**.

2 But I thought you said the **24th**, not the **25th**.

3 I didn't buy it. You said **you'd** do it.

4 I thought you said **Sunday**, not **Saturday**.

5 We agreed it was **your** responsibility, not mine.

6 He said he'd **be** there, but he's gone on **holiday**.

Students practise the sentences, with appropriate stress, with their partners.

### Task

1 Distribute the situation cards to pairs of students. Give them time to think of what to say in each of the five situations. Then students role-play the situations.

2 Students report back to their group on how they resolved the problem.

3 In groups, students talk about a similar situation they have been in and find out who had the most difficult situation to resolve.

Feed back on language and review learning objectives.

## Audio script

### 8.1

#### Conversation 1

**Helen:** Hello. Is that Tom?

**Tom:** Hi, Helen.

**Helen:** Thank goodness I managed to get hold of you. Listen, I'm in the airport but the flight I thought I was flying on went last night. You booked the 9pm flight last night but I wanted to travel at 9am this morning.

**Tom:** Ah yes. The problem is there is no flight this morning so I booked you on the flight last night.

**Helen:** But Tom you can't do that and then not say anything. You told me you had booked the flight at 9am, not 9pm the previous day. I thought you'd organised everything for today! You should've told me!

**Tom:** Yeah, sorry about that.

**Helen:** So, what do I do now? I've got a meeting at 2 o'clock this afternoon!

**Tom:** Well, probably the most sensible thing is to try to get another flight. Is there another flight this morning?

**Helen:** Yeah, there's one at 11am. Can you get in touch with the travel agent so I can pick up my ticket from the desk?

**Tom:** I could. Or you could always try to buy a ticket there. It would probably be quicker.

**Helen:** That's not an option. I don't have enough money in my account to pay for a new ticket.

**Tom:** OK, I'll get in touch with them now. Sorry about that, but you'll probably still manage to arrive on time.

**Helen:** I hope so.

### 8.2

**James:** Hello Janice. It's James here. I'm at the conference centre for this meeting with our sales team but the room you said you'd booked is being used for another meeting until noon.

**Janice:** Oh. That's odd. Just let me check. I booked room 305 for 10 people from 10 to 12 today.

**James:** But I thought you'd booked 306. I asked you to book a room for 20 people. Room 305 is too small: there are at least 15 people here for the meeting.

**Janice:** Oh, I'm sorry, but I thought you said the group from Wales had dropped out and there would only be 10 people there.

**James:** No, they're all here. So what can you do about it? I need to get this sorted now.

**Janice:** OK, well what if I call the centre and try to get an alternative room?

**James:** OK, I'll wait for your call.

**Janice:** OK, I'll get on to that now. Sorry.

### 8.3

You booked the 9pm flight last night but I wanted to travel at 9am this morning.