

Complaints and apologies

Lead-in

1 Work in small groups and discuss the following questions.

- 1 Do you think that customer service is generally good in your country? Give some examples.
- 2 How does it compare with other countries you have been to? Give some examples if you can.
- 3 Have you ever had to complain about anything? What happened? Were you satisfied with the outcome?
- 4 What happens in your country if a complaint is not resolved?
- 5 What do you think of the saying 'The customer is always right'?

Input

1 **▶9.1 ▶9.2** Listen to two conversations in which a customer complains. For each conversation, answer the questions.

1 Where does the conversation take place?

.....

2 What is the complaint?

.....

3 How is it sorted out?

.....

Which complaint is dealt with best? Why?

2 **▶9.2** Listen to the second conversation again and complete the gaps.

A Good morning. How can I help you, madam?

B Well, ¹ a complaint.

A Right, OK. ² the problem?

B ³ the mobile phone I bought here last week. I only got it on Monday and now ⁴.

A Oh, ⁵. Could you tell me exactly what happened?

B Well, ⁶ in the shop and when I got home, but a couple of days later the screen ⁷ and now ⁸.

A OK. Let's see if we can ⁹. Do you have the phone with you now?

B Yes, here you are.

A Hmm, OK, when did you last charge it up?

B Charge what? The battery? It didn't come with a charger, so I ¹⁰ that these new smartphones don't need to be charged.

- A Ah, I see,¹¹ the problem then. I'm afraid you still need to charge it every few days. They must have forgotten to include the charger – so sorry about that. That's very unusual. Have you got the box there? I'll need to return it to the manufacturers.
- B Yes, here you are.
- A Thanks. I'm very sorry about that. OK, then, I can either¹² or, if you prefer, a replacement phone.
- B OK, that's great. I¹³ the replacement phone if that's all right.
- A That's fine. Right, ... here's your new phone then. Let me just check ... yes, the charger's inside. Now¹⁴ the same number?
- B Oh, yes.
- A So just let me change over the SIM card¹⁵. And you've still got all your contacts there.
- B Great, thank you.
- A Any problems, then give us a call or come by the shop again.
- B Thank you,¹⁶ helpful.
- A Pleasure, madam. Is there anything else I can help you with?
- B No, that's fine, thank you.
- A Bye, now. Have a good day.

Language focus

1 Look at the script for the second conversation again and find expressions to write in the table below.

A The customer

Introducing a complaint	Explaining the problem	Thanking

B The assistant

Apologising	Asking for details	Explaining what you can do	Closing the conversation

2 Work with a partner. Look at the following phrases and add them to the table. Can you think of any more?

- | | |
|---|---|
| I'm afraid I have a problem. | the end of the day. |
| Will there be anything else? | I'm afraid I want to complain about ... |
| I'm afraid it's not our responsibility. You need to contact ... | Thank you so much for your help. |
| I'll speak to the manager and get back to you by | I'll see what I can do. |

3 Think back to the first conversation you listened to. Work with a partner and recreate the dialogue so that the situation is resolved politely and successfully.

4 The words below can all be used to describe problems with products and services. Put each word in the correct column in the table. Some of the words will go in more than one column.

badly done sub-standard inefficient shoddy rude dirty scratched
unsatisfactory cracked bad-mannered pokey slapdash broken shabby
run-down unhelpful incompetent offhand

hotel room	member of staff	car repairs	mobile phone

Task

- 1 You and a partner are going to role-play a complaint situation. Read the cards your teacher gives you and prepare your role carefully. Act out the role-play.
- 2 When your teacher tells you, swap cards with another group and change roles.
- 3 Tell the class about the most interesting conversation you had. Did you have any difficulties?

Review

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