

2 Dealing with customers

2.2 Vocabulary Telephoning and customer care

Discussion

- 1 With a partner discuss the questions.
- 1 When was the last time you telephoned a company call centre? Why did you call – to solve a problem, make an enquiry, for another reason?
 - 2 What was the result of the phone call? Were you happy with the service?

Reading and vocabulary

- 2 Read the article and complete the information about how to deal with customers on the phone. Use the words in the box to help you.

hang up discount answer
lose your temper agree on a solution
exchange deal with call back
put through interrupt



Customer: 'My mobile phone won't make outgoing calls.'
Helpline operator: 'Do you have the phone with you, sir?'
Customer: 'Yes, I'm using it now.'
Helpline operator: 'Well, the phone is working fine, sir. You just called me!'

The Seven Steps to Customer Satisfaction



- 1 **GREET THE CUSTOMER.** When you (1) answer a call from a dissatisfied customer you need to greet them in a warm manner. Thank the customer for calling. Remember that when a customer calls to tell that something is wrong it is your opportunity to put it right.
- 2 **ASK WHAT THE PROBLEM IS.** You need to find out why they are calling. Simply ask what the problem is and let them explain. You may not be able to (2) deal with the problem. Don't say 'I'm sorry, I can't help,' instead explain to the customer that you cannot help them and ask for their telephone number so that somebody can (3) call them back. Sometimes the customer may want to wait while you (4) put them through to the correct department.
- 3 **LISTEN CAREFULLY.** Remember the customer may say a lot. You need to listen and try not to (5) hang up. An angry customer may take a long time to explain what the problem is and so it is very important that you stay calm and that you don't (6) lose your temper. It is a good idea to take notes so that you are 100% clear about all of the details. Ask questions if they are not telling you the information you need to know.
- 4 **DEFINE THE PROBLEM.** Once the customer has finished explaining the problem, use your notes to check you have understood the problem correctly.
- 5 **SUGGEST A SOLUTION.** Now that you know all of the details of the problem you can suggest a solution. Don't blame another department. Make an apology and suggest a solution. The customer may ask you to refund their money, they may ask for a (7) discount on their next order or they might ask to (8) exchange the goods that they bought for other items. You also must be realistic. Don't promise to deliver 10,000 new parts for next week if it cannot be done. The customer will be even angrier next week when the parts don't arrive.
- 6 **CONFIRM THE SOLUTION.** Once you and the customer (9) agreed on a solution, confirm it so that you both understand what has been decided. Make sure that the customer knows exactly what you are going to do and when you are going to do it.
- 7 **END THE CONVERSATION.** Now that the customer is happy you can end the conversation. Thank the customer again for calling. It is a good idea to let the customer (10) _____ first, as this gives them a final chance to add anything.

11/12/2013

2 →

Listening

3 1:25-1:27 Listen to three telephone conversations between customer service assistants and dissatisfied customers and answer the questions.

- 1 Why are each of the customers calling?
- 2 Which of the 'seven steps' from the article opposite do the customer service assistants forget when they answer the call?

Telephone language

4 Match the beginning with the correct ending to make questions about telephoning.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 What's the longest you've ever been put | a) on hold for? |
| 2 Have you ever hung | b) through to the wrong person? |
| 3 Have you ever been put | c) long should it take them to answer the phone? |
| 4 Do you always ask people to confirm | d) your temper when you are talking on the phone? |
| 5 When you call a company, how | e) up on somebody? |
| 6 Do you lose | f) arrangements that you make on the phone? |

Work with a partner. Take it in turns to ask and answer the questions.

Reading and discussion

5 Read the advertisements below for customer service jobs.

A friendly, polite **telephone manner** is essential to this role, but you'll need good **listening skills** and the ability to be **reassuring**. You will be naturally **sympathetic** and be able to handle often sensitive conversations. Could you be there with the right answers?

For this role you need an **outgoing personality** and good **interpersonal skills**. You need the confidence to speak to existing and potential customers about our services and products and the ability to **persuade**. You are always ready to take the next call.

Which do you think is for a healthcare company and which for an insurance company?

6 Match the words in **bold** in the advertisements to the definitions below.

- 1 to make someone agree to do something (v) *persuade*
- 2 relationships between you and other people (two words) *outgoing personality*
- 3 caring and open to understanding other people's problems (adj) *sympathetic*
- 4 the way you speak on the phone (two words) *telephone manner*
- 5 the ability to listen (two words) *listening skills*
- 6 making someone feel less worried (adj) *reassuring*
- 7 if you have this you are friendly and enjoy talking to people (two words) *interpersonal skills*

Internet research

Search for the keywords *customer service* to find more information about how to deal with customers.

7 Work with a partner. You need to find someone for a job as a helpline operator for your school, university or workplace. They will be responsible for dealing with new customers and potential students. Decide what five essential skills and qualities they need to have and create a job advertisement. Compare your advertisement with another pair's.

11/12/2013



Dealing with customers

Refresh your memory

countable nouns
a computer, some computers
singular and plural form

uncountable nouns
some water, some advice
no plural form

any
Are there any computers?
There isn't any water.
questions and negatives with both kinds of nouns

some
I need some information.
Some files are missing.
positive sentences with both types of nouns

a lot (of)
He's got a lot of reports to write.
She gave me a lot of good advice.
positive sentences for both kinds of nouns

much/many
How much water is there?
How many computers are there?
much is used for questions with uncountable nouns
many is used for questions with countable nouns

Grammar reference page 120

polite requests
Can or *could* are used for making polite requests. They are almost the same. However *could* is a little more polite.
Would you mind is very polite, and is always followed by verb + *ing*.

offers
Do you want / would you like me to + verb are polite ways of offering to do something.

Grammar reference page 121

2.3 Grammar Countable & uncountable nouns, requests and offers

Test yourself: countable and uncountable nouns.

1 Are these nouns countable or uncountable? Put them into the correct columns in the table below.

company customer money news information accommodation
progress research equipment phone call helpline overtime employee

Countable nouns	Uncountable nouns
	progress

2 Use the words from the table above and *much / many* or *a lot* to complete the sentences.

- Human Resources wants us to reduce our head count: how _____ are there currently in this department?
- We've spent _____ of _____ on office equipment this year.
- I'm worried about the long hours you have been working. How _____ did you do last month?
- The director wants an update on the repair work to the building. How _____ have the builders made?
- The company is doing _____ of market _____. We want to know what that customer really thinks of the new product line.

Test yourself: Polite requests and offers

3 Complete the telephone conversation with *can* or *would you mind* and the verbs from the box.

help put me through ask calling back give

Receptionist: Niven and Sellars. How (1) _____ I (2) _____ you?
 Carlos: Good morning. (3) _____ you (4) _____ to Marco Grella, please?
 R: One moment. (5) _____ I (6) _____ who's calling?
 C: My name's Carlos Torres.
 R: Putting you through now, Mr Torres. Oh, Mr Grella's line's busy. (7) _____ (8) _____ in ten minutes?
 C: No, that's fine. (9) _____ you (10) _____ me his direct number, please?
 R: Certainly, his extension number is 357.
 C: Thank you. Goodbye.
 R: Goodbye.

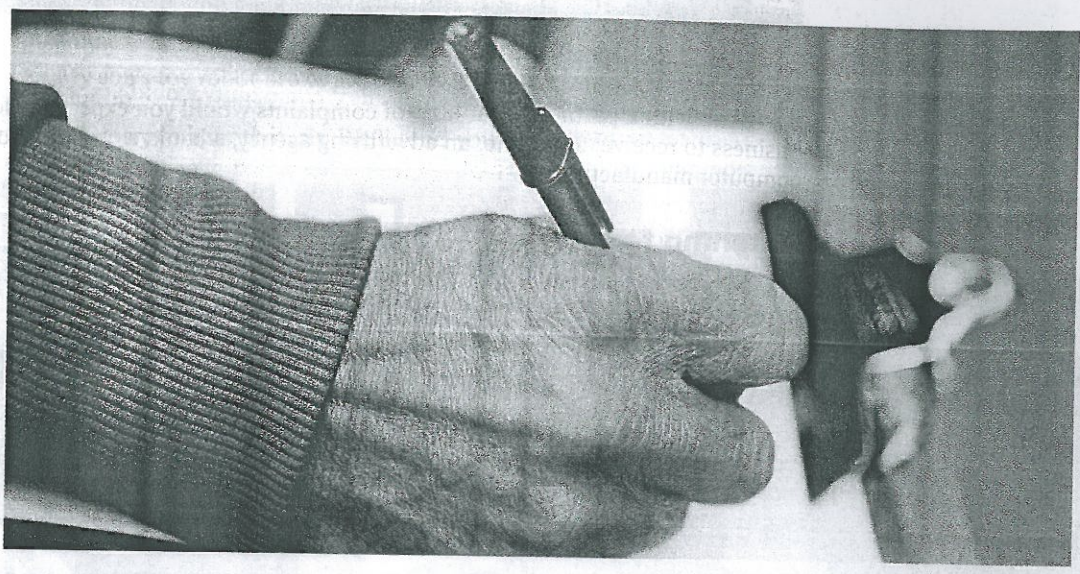
4 Read the statements below and respond with offers and requests. Use *Do you want / Would you like me to* for offers (1-4) and *Would you mind +ing* for requests (5-6).

- It's cold in here. (shut / window) _____
- I think we have run out of photocopier paper. (order more) _____
- These books are heavy! (carry for you) _____
- I have left the report on my desk. (fetch) _____
- We need to take a break. (make us coffee) _____
- We are going to be late for our next meeting. (drive us station) _____

→ 120, 121

W

A customer survey



- 5** Complete the customer service dialogue using *some / any / much / many* and the verbs in brackets in an appropriate form.
- A: Hello, this is Arne Schumann from Mainstream Motors. Would you mind (1) _____ (answer) (2) _____ questions about the car you bought from us last month?
- B: Well, how (3) _____ time is this going to (4) _____ (take)? I'm in a bit of a hurry.
- A: It won't take long, only about five minutes. There aren't very (5) _____ questions.
- B: All right then.
- A: First I'd like (6) _____ information about the salesman. On a scale of one to ten, how (7) _____ marks would you (8) _____ (give) him for friendliness?
- B: Er, eight.
- A: Good. And how (9) _____ marks for competence?
- B: What do you mean by 'competence'?
- A: For example, when you needed (10) _____ advice about which make or model car to buy, was he able to give it?
- B: Oh, I see, yes, he was very good. He gave me (11) _____ really useful advice. I'd give him ten out of ten for competence. He certainly knew what he was talking about.
- A: That's good to hear. You bought the car four weeks ago; can you tell me approximately how (12) _____ kilometres you've driven in that time?
- B: Oh, not (13) _____. The week after I bought the car, I broke my leg.
- A: Oh, I am sorry to hear that. Are there (14) _____ other drivers in your household?
- B: My wife can drive but she doesn't like it. She says there are too (15) _____ other drivers on the road these days.
- A: And finally, are there (16) _____ questions you'd like to ask us?
- B: Not at the moment.
- A: Well, thank you for your time, goodbye.

Roleplay

6 Work with a partner. You are colleagues who work in the same office. You are both about to go on holiday tomorrow and you need each other's help to finish your work. Take it in turns to make requests and offers.

Student A

- You need Student B to check your accounts. There is a mistake you can't find!
- You both need to change some money. The bank closes in half an hour.
- Your passport is at Student B's house.
- You need to make a conference call to China but you can't remember how to do it.

Student B

- You need Student A to give you last month's sale figures for your report.
- You both need to check your flight departure times but Student A has no Internet connection at the moment.
- Your suitcase is broken.
- You need to write six different emails in English about the project you and Student A are working on.

Internet research

Search for the keywords *polite requests* to learn more about making them.