



Business Pre-Intermediate

Unit 5: Customer service

Objectives

- Talk about customer service
- Asking questions
- Soften a message
- Make and deal with complaints



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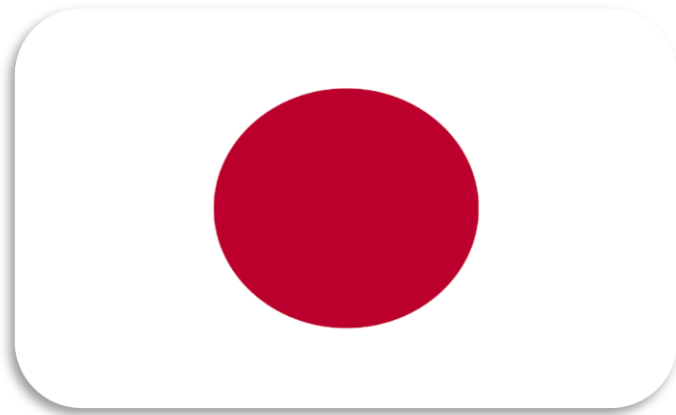
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1. What countries do you think provide the best customer service? Discuss it with your teacher / partner, then check your guesses on the next page.



2. Read the information below. Do you agree that these are the countries with the best customer service?
Have you been to any of these countries?

Countries with the Best Customer Service



Japan



Thailand



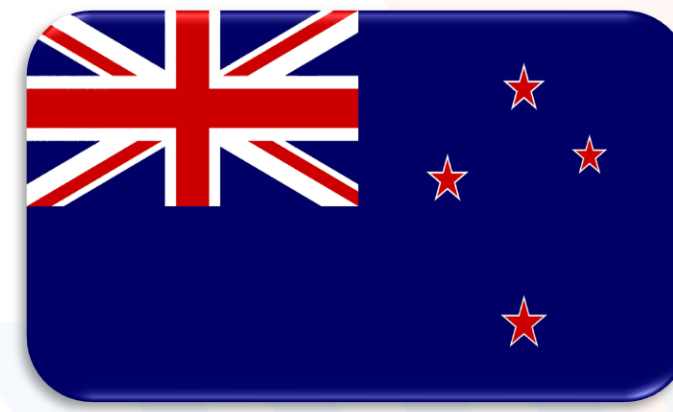
Canada



Germany



United Arab Emirates



New Zealand



Audio
5.1

3. Listen to the podcast about customer service in Japan and complete the notes.

1. Omotenashi is _____

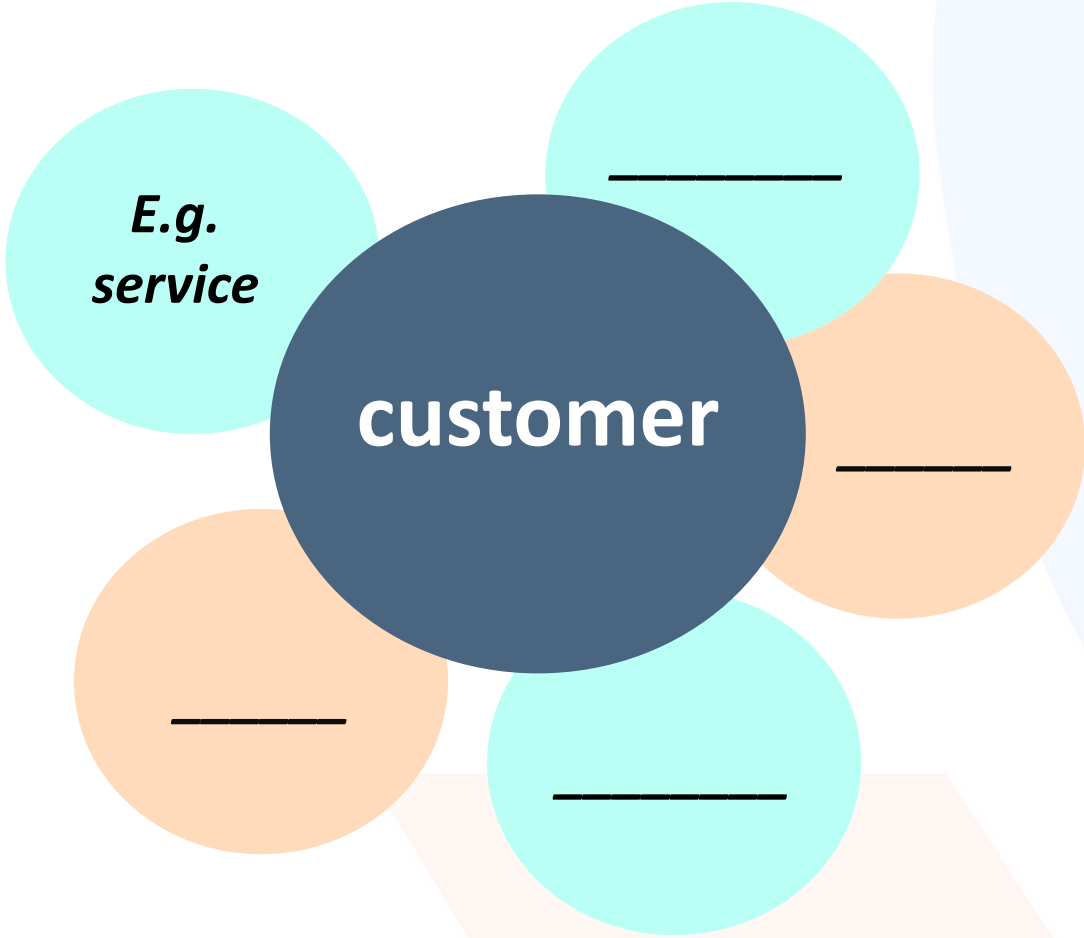
2. Examples of great customer service:

 - Kathy _____
 - Lee _____
 - Tom _____



Audio
5.1

4. Listen again and write down different word combinations with the word 'customer'.
E.g.: customer service



5. Complete the sentences (1-5) with expressions (a-e).

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. In Japan, _____ is very important and always polite. | a. customer feedback |
| 2. Shops focus on good _____ to help their customers. | b. customer needs |
| 3. They give special offers to build _____. | c. customer service |
| 4. Stores try to satisfy _____ by listening to what people want. | d. customer loyalty |
| 5. They ask for _____ to make their service better. | e. customer care |

6. Tell your teacher / partner about the quality of customer service in your country.

extra writing

Answer the question **(50-70 words)**:

What is the secret of excellent customer service?

extra vocabulary

Customer expectations - what customers think a product or service will be like.

E.g. Stores try to meet customer expectations and provide good service.

1. Answer the questions.

1. Do you agree with the key elements of good customer service below?
2. Which one is the most important for you?

Reliability



Quality



Friendliness



Patience



Care



Respect

2. Read the text and say if the sentences are True or False.

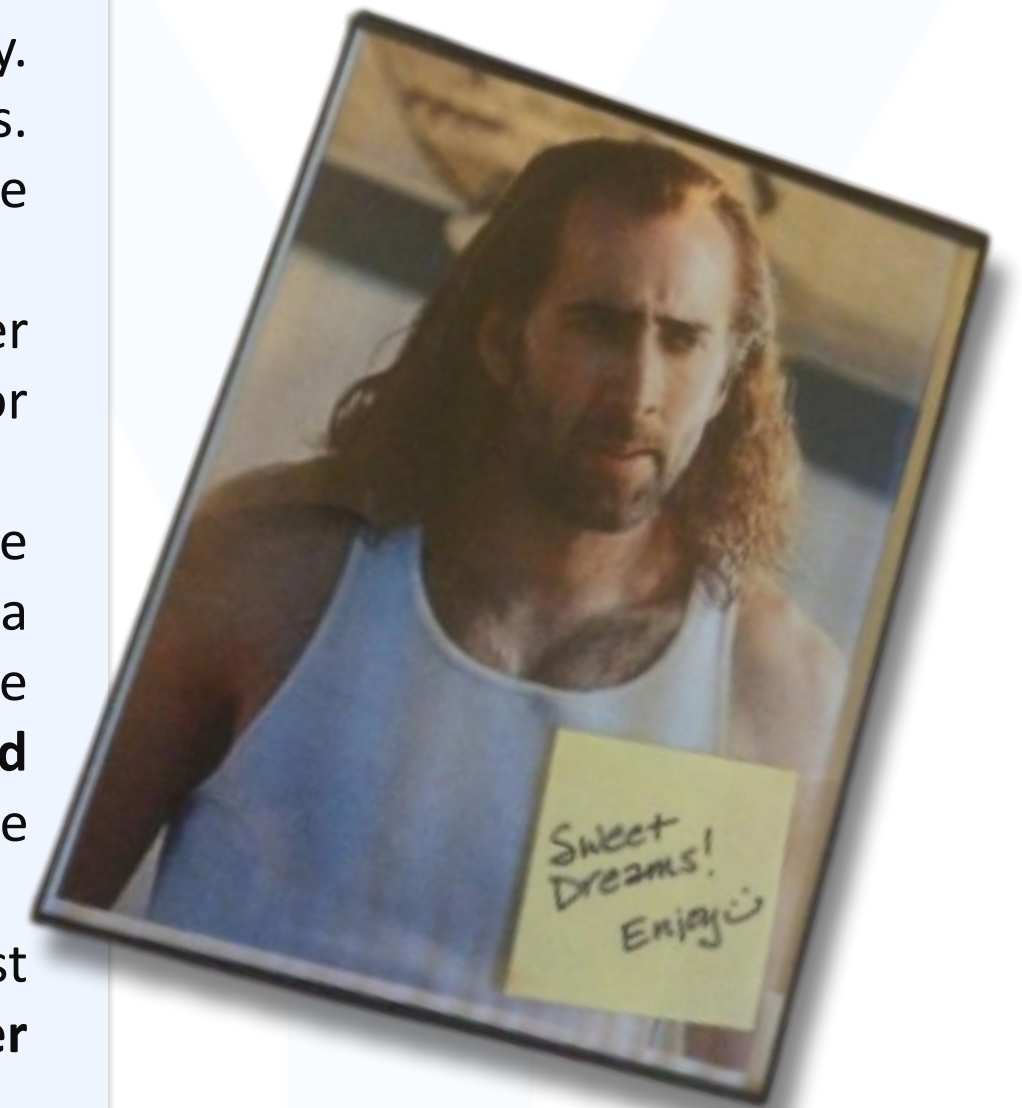
1. A hotel decorated a guest's room with Nicholas Cage photos. ____
2. Only hotels provide great customer service. ____
3. Delta Hotels upgraded a guest's room and gave him a gift. ____
4. Capital One gave the client a new wallet. ____

Great customer service is very important for any company. It ensures customer loyalty. When customers **report a problem** or **have a query**, they want quick and helpful answers. This help is called **customer support**. It's not just about fixing problems. It's also a chance to **get feedback** from customers.

For example, the Whitney Peak Hotel did something special. A guest asked to decorate her room with photos of Nicholas Cage. The hotel did it! This **experience** was **memorable** for the guest and showed the hotel really listens and wants to make stays special.

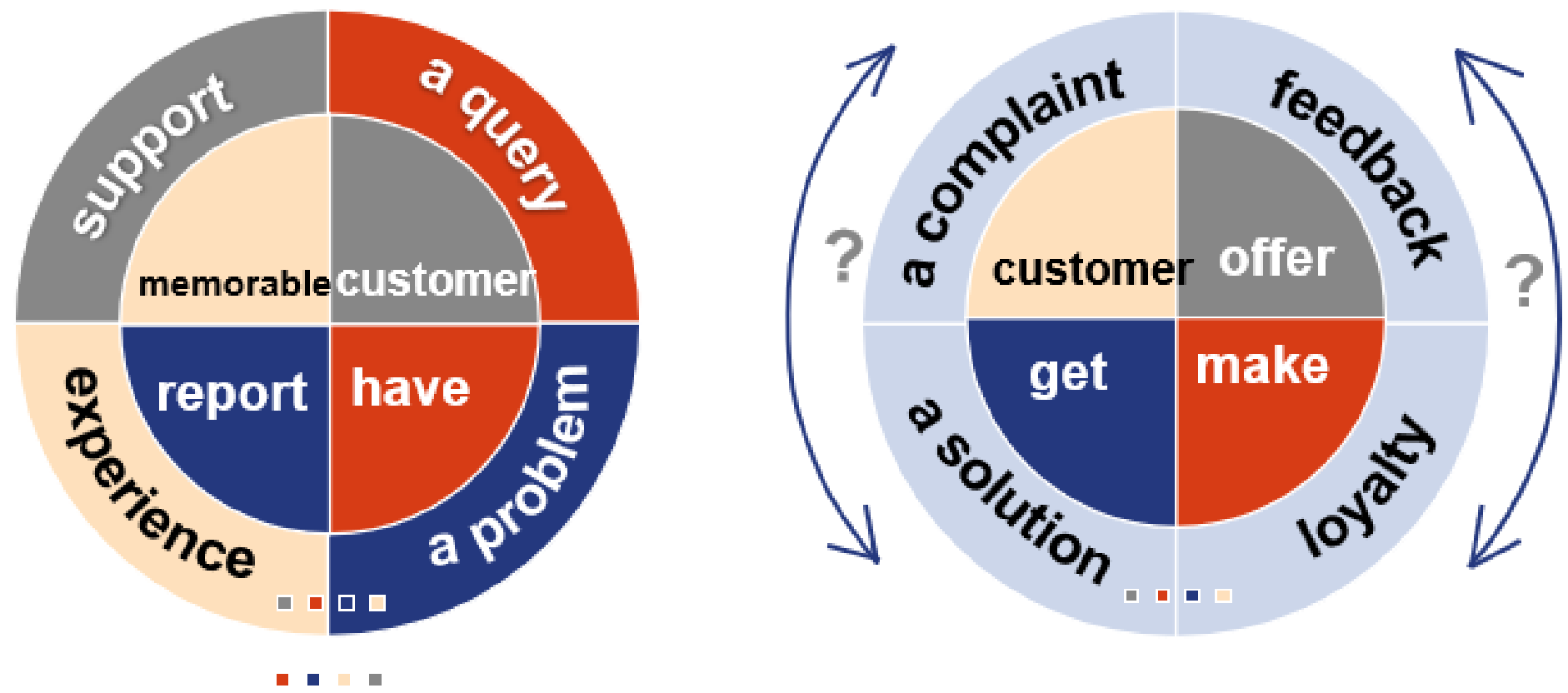
Other companies, like Delta Hotels and Capital One, do great things too. Delta Hotels made a guest happy by changing their room to one with a better view and even said sorry with a gift. This was after the guest **made a complaint** about his first room's view. Capital One helped a customer who had lost his wallet while traveling. After the customer **explained the issue**, they delivered a new bank card to the customer's hotel within 24 hours and gave him some emergency money.

The best customer service happens when companies **offer a solution** quickly because fast **response times** show that a company cares. This is how good service builds **customer loyalty**.



3. How do you need to move the dial to make collocations using all the words?

Example: Turn dial clockwise once.



5. Tell your teacher / partner about:

- a. your best customer service experience
- b. your worst customer service experience

6. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 very bad, 5 very good) rate the level of customer service at your company. Speak about the following points:

- reliability
- quality
- care
- friendliness
- patience
- respect

4. Complete the sentences with some of the expressions from exercise 3.

- 1. Visiting Disneyland was a _____ for the whole family.
- 2. She wanted to _____ about the noise in her hotel room.
- 3. The best companies quickly offer a solution when customers _____.
- 4. Good _____ often includes being friendly and quick to help.

7. Think about a premium service that you can provide at your company. Discuss the items below or use your own ideas (*optional*).

- loyalty cards
- priority service
- personalized offers
- personal account manager
- after-hours support
- freebies and gifts

extra writing

Imagine you bought a new laptop and received exceptional service from the staff. Write a 'thank you' email to the store manager **(50-70 words)**.



1. Answer the survey questions.



Question	Answer
1. What brand is your smartphone?	☐ Apple ☐ Samsung ☐ Other _____
2. How long do you have your current phone?	☐ Less than 6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ More than 1 year ☐ Other _____
3. Were you satisfied with your previous phone?	☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Why did you change your phone?	☐ It was too old. ☐ It stopped working. ☐ I wanted a new phone ☐ Other _____
5. Who recommended the phone you currently use?	☐ A friend ☐ A family member ☐ A professional reviewer ☐ Other _____
6. Are you thinking about buying a new phone soon?	☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Read the rule and complete the Language Point with the questions from 1.

LANGUAGE POINT

Word order in questions

* Questions with *be*

Question	Verb	Subject
What brand	is	your smartphone?
E.g. _____		

* If **Who** or **What** is the subject, the word order is the same as in a sentence. E.g. _____

* Questions with verbs (live, speak, etc.)

ASI = Auxiliary Subject Infinitive
QuASI = Question Auxiliary Subject Infinitive

Question	Auxiliary	Subject	Infinitive (=verb)
Why	did	you	<u>change</u> your phone?
E.g. _____			
E.g. _____			

Optional: In exercise 1, find examples of questions using:

- Present Simple
- Past Simple
- Present Continuous

3. Choose the correct option.

- 1. What did you *buy / bought*?
- 2. How *do / does* you solve this problem?
- 3. Who *did serve / served* you yesterday?
- 4. How *do / does* she help customers?
- 5. When does the store *open / opens*?
- 6. What *are / is* they doing now?
- 7. *Did you call / Do you called* the support team?

4. Make and answer the questions.

When	did do	you	shop online?	
How often			speak with	yesterday?
Who			compare	prices?
How			contact	customer service?
			make	your last purchase?

extra

grammar

- If **Who** or **What** is the subject, the word order is the same as in a sentence.
E.g. Who ate my cake?
- If **Who**, **What** or **Which** asks about the object, we put auxiliary before the subject.
E.g. Who did you meet yesterday?



5. Imagine that you want to improve customer service at your company. Write a survey to find out what your customers like / dislike / want. Use the ideas below.

E.g. Price – you / satisfied / prices - Are you satisfied with our prices?

- **price** – prices / affordable?
- **website** – website / easy-to-use?
- **quality** – how / can / improve / quality?
- **product range** – what other products (services) / we / offer?
- **online support** – helpful?
- **special offers** – what kind of special offers / you / like?
- **your own ideas**

extra writing

Answer the question **(50-70 words)**:

How could you improve the quality of customer service in your company?



1. Answer the questions.

1. As a customer, have you ever complained? If yes, what was the complaint about?
2. Is it better to write an email or complain in person / on the phone?
3. What do your company's customers / clients complain about?
4. Why might a customer complain to one of these companies:
 - online store
 - bank
 - internet service provider
 - online streaming company

2. Read the customers’ posts on X. Have you been in a similar situation?



So upset with StreamNow! They said the first month was free but then charged me €10. Not fair! Be careful of extra costs! #StreamNow #NotHappy #WatchOut



Bought a blender from KitchenGear and it stopped working after just one use! So angry! #FaultyProduct #Unhappy



Audio 5.2

3. Listen to two conversations between the customers and customer support and complete the table.

	Conversation 1	Conversation 2
Problem / Query		
Reason for the problem		
Solution		

4. Match (1-5) with (a-e).

1. Can you _____

2. What exactly _____

3. I'll _____

4. We're sorry for _____

5. I'm sorry to _____
- a. hear that.

b. is the problem?

c. give me more details?

d. look into it.

e. the inconvenience.

5. Read the Key Expressions and clarify the meaning of the phrases you do not understand.

Asking about the problem

- How can I help?
- What can I do for you?
- Can you give me more details?
- What exactly is the problem?

Making the complaint

- I'm sorry, but / I'm afraid ...
- (The machine) doesn't work
- There's a problem with ...
- (It) still hasn't arrived.
- I'm not very happy (about it).
- I'd like (a refund/replacement).

Sympathizing / Apologizing

- I'm very sorry about that.
- I do apologize.
- I'm sorry to hear that.
- It's our/my fault. I'm sorry.
- I'm afraid we can't ...
- We're sorry for the inconvenience.

Dealing with the complaint

- I'll look into it / deal with it right away.
- I'll get back to you.
- Let me check.
- We'll send you ...
- We can offer you ...
- I'll wait to hear from you.

6. Here are some complaints. Say what ‘it’ is in each case.

1. It’s wrong. **‘it’** says we had two bottles of wine but we ordered only one.
2. I’m sorry, **‘it’** is wrong. I wanted to travel on the 4th, not the 14th.
3. I don't want **‘it’** because it's cold, tastes bad, and there's a fly in it!
4. **“It”** was supposed to have a sea view, but I can only see the parking lot.

7. Work with your teacher / partner. Take turns to role-play the situations in exercise 6.

extra writing

Write a letter of complaint to your Internet provider because your Internet connection is too slow and unstable **(50-70 words)**.
In your email, explain:

- why you are writing
- what you want the company to do.

Asking about the problem

- How can I help?
- What can I do for you?
- Can you give me more details?
- What exactly is the problem?

Dealing with the complaint

- I’ll look into it / deal with it right away.
- I’ll get back to you.
- Let me check.
- We’ll send you ...
- We can offer you ...
- I’ll wait to hear from you.

Making the complaint

- I’m sorry, but / I’m afraid ...
- (The machine) doesn’t work
- There’s a problem with ...
- (It) still hasn’t arrived.
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Sympathizing / Apologizing

- I’m very sorry about that.
- I do apologize.
- I’m sorry to hear that.
- It’s our/my fault. I’m sorry.
- I’m afraid we can’t ...
- We’re sorry for the inconvenience.

1. Match people (a-e) with the most common complaints (1-5).

a)



What do you mean I can't have my money back?

b)



Your colleague didn't call me back!

c)



Why are there lobsters on my bill? I didn't order them!

d)



I ordered 50, but you sent me 15!

e)



My order H12589RS didn't arrive yesterday.

- 1. Lack of customer service
- 2. Items never arrived
- 3. Wrong delivery
- 4. No refunds
- 5. An overcharge



Audio 5.3

2. Listen to two conversations and match each conversation with a typical complaint (1-5).

- 1. Conversation 1 _____
- 2. Conversation 2 _____

3. Read the conversations below. Are the answers polite? Why / Why not?

1. **Customer:** I would like a refund.
Customer Support: We don't give refunds.
2. **Customer:** I need some sort of compensation.
Customer Support: It's not possible, we only give money back if we cancel the flight.
3. **Customer:** The invoice amount is 850 euros, but we agreed on 200 euros.
Customer Support: You are wrong.
4. **Customer:** I did not ask for it.
Customer Support: Our records show that you did.
5. **Customer:** Can I speak with someone in the billing department then?
Customer Support: You can't. They are busy.



Audio 5.4

4. 'Soften' the responses in exercise 3, then listen and check.

Example:

1. **Customer:** I would like a refund.
Customer Support: *I'm afraid* we can't give you a refund for this kind of delay.
2. **Customer:** I need some sort of compensation.
Customer Support: _____
3. **Customer:** The invoice amount is 850 euros, but we agreed on 200 euros.
Customer Support: _____
4. **Customer:** I did not ask for it.
Customer Support: _____
5. **Customer:** Can I speak with someone in the billing department then?
Customer Support: _____

5. Role-play the situations. Use the expressions below to 'soften' a message.

- Sorry about that.
- Well, actually ...
- Sorry, but ...
- I'm afraid that...
- Unfortunately,...
- I'm sorry to say that...
- There might be a slight problem with...
- I understand your point, but,...
- That may not be the best...
- It seems like...

Situation 1

Student A

You are a customer who bought a toaster that soon broke. You want to return it, but you lost the receipt.

Student B

You are Customer Support. You receive a call from a customer who bought a toaster that soon broke. The customer lost the receipt and you can't accept a return without it. Explain this to the customer.

Situation 2

Student A

You are a customer who gave the wrong delivery address for your order. You want to change the address.

Student B

You are Customer Support. You receive a call from a customer who needs to change the delivery address. But your company already shipped the package, so you can't change the address. Explain this to the customer.

1. Read the customers' requests below and discuss them with your teacher / partner. Is the customer always right?

1 **X** I work at a pet store. Once, a customer called to order a delivery and wanted a dog toy but wasn't sure which one. I had to squeeze different toys into the phone until he heard 'the right' one.

2

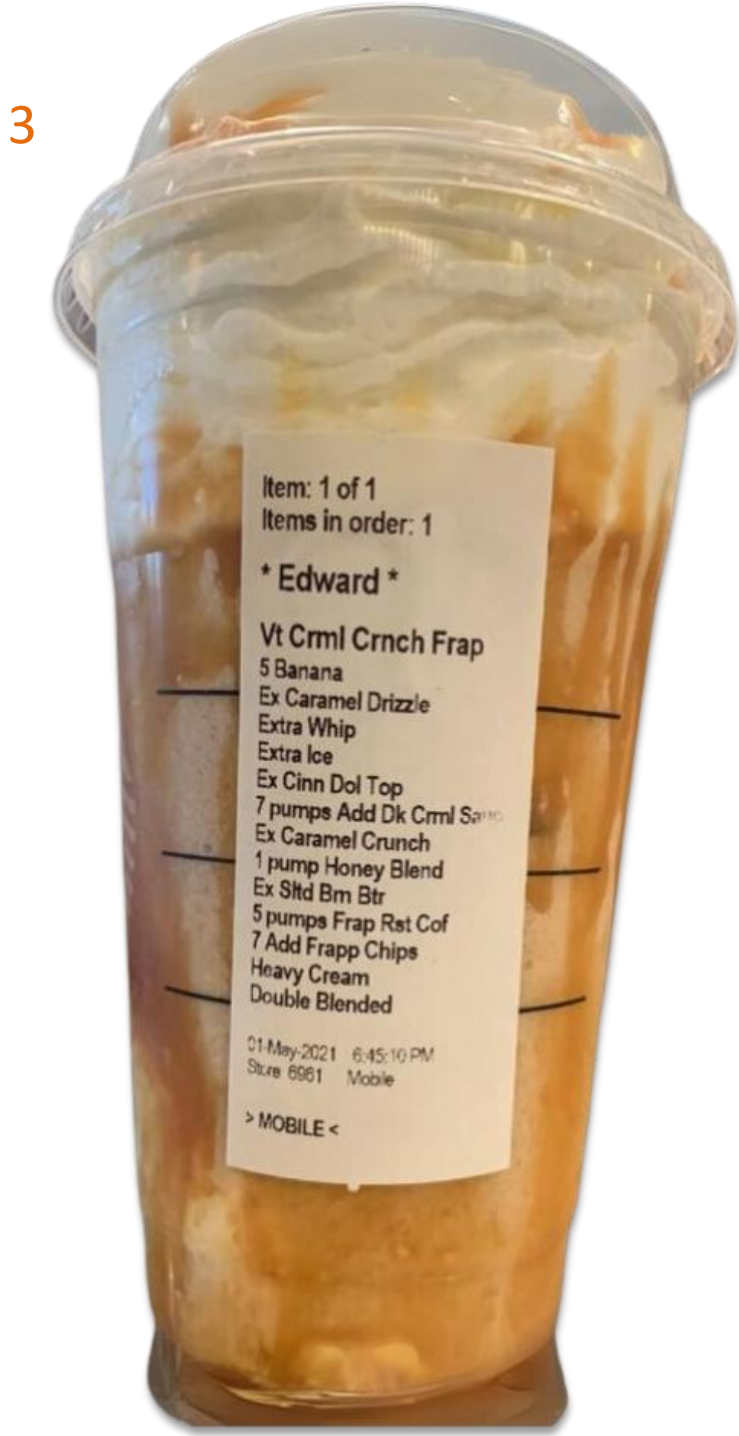
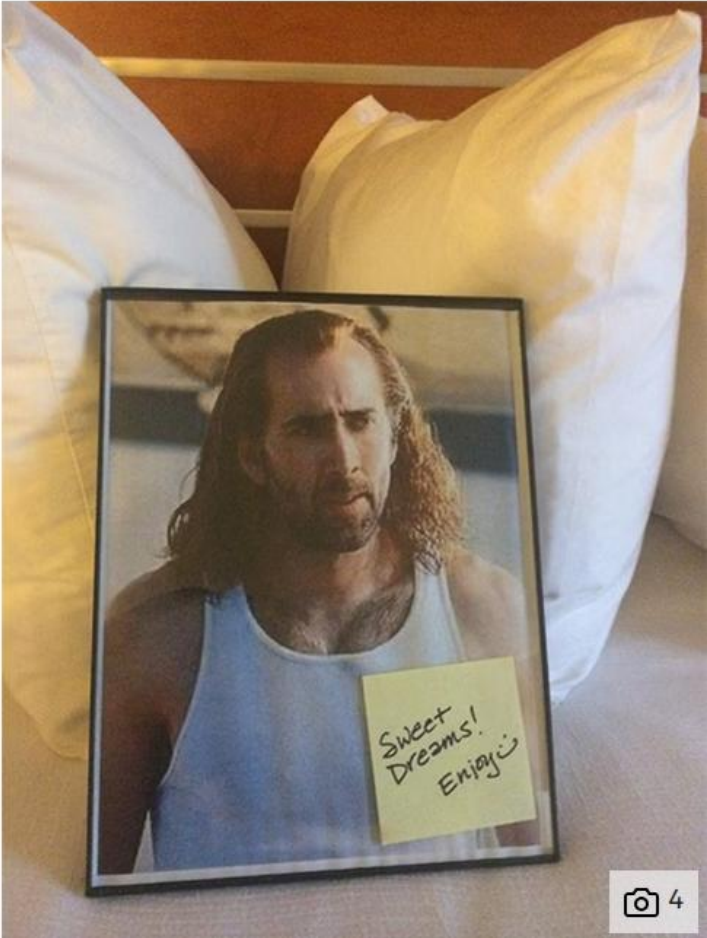
Good morning Ms. [redacted] Welcome to the Hotel Indigo San Antonio Riverwalk. If we can assist with anything, anytime, simply text us.
-Joe

Wed, Jan 14, 4:02 PM

Can I please have a framed picture of Nicholas Cage in Con air on my bed by 6?

It would be our pleasure to assist you.
-Ramon

Thank you!



2. Match the phrases (1-6) with their definitions / pictures (a-f).

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. back in the day | a. to meet a customer's needs |
| 2. bakery | b. in conclusion |
| 3. to accommodate the customer | c. a place that sells bread and cakes |
| 4. at the end of the day | d. in the past |
| 5. doughnut | |
| 6. cannoli Sicilian | |



f.



e.



3. Watch the video and answer the questions.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= QVI5e7rgkg&ab_ch
annel=bakemagazine](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVI5e7rgkg&ab_channel=bakemagazine)

1. What is Edward's business?
2. What examples of special requests made by customers does he give?
3. Why does Edward try to accommodate customer requests?

4. Read what Edward says about customer service. Do you agree with him? Why? / Why not?

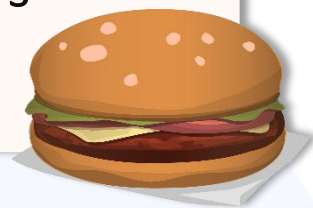
1. *'We couldn't be where we are without our customers.'*
2. *'I'll always try to accommodate the customer. Because at the end of the day, without them, we're nothing.'*
3. *'If there's something that somebody really wants, if I can do it, I'll do it.'*

5. Discuss the situations with your teacher / partner. Is the customer right in each case?

1. A customer enters a coffee shop and orders a latte. When served, he claims the latte is too hot and demands a new one. The barista offers to let it cool or add cold milk. The customer insists on a new drink immediately.



3. A family goes to a fast food restaurant. They order burgers. When served, the burgers have onions. The parents ask the staff to pick the onions out of the burgers but the staff refuse.



How would you react if you were the:

1. barista
2. shop assistant
3. restaurant manager

2. A woman buys a sweater from a clothing store. At home, she notices a small tear. She returns to the store for a refund, but she lost the receipt. The store offers to exchange the sweater instead, but she demands her money back.



1. Match (1-7) with (a-g).

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. build | a. problem |
| 2. satisfy | b. query |
| 3. report | c. complaint |
| 4. have | d. feedback |
| 5. get | e. customer loyalty |
| 6. make | f. a solution |
| 7. offer | g. customer needs |

2. Match the expressions from exercise 1 with their definitions below.

1. Express dissatisfaction.
2. Tell someone about an issue.
3. Ask a question.
4. Suggest a way to solve a problem.
5. Receive opinions or suggestions.
6. Make customers want to keep coming back.
7. Meet what customers need and want.

3. Complete the sentences with the words below.

- support
- care
- feedback
- experience
- times
- service

1. When you buy something, you might need **customer** _____ if you have questions.
2. Good **customer** _____ means helping people whenever they need it.
3. After using a product, the company might ask for your **customer** _____.
4. If your computer breaks, you can call **customer** _____ for help.
5. Fast **response** _____ are important when a customer asks a question.
6. Watching fireworks for the first time can be a **memorable** _____.

4. Put the words in the correct order to make questions.

1. you / do / if / need / you / service / customer / do / What?
2. you / care / often / do / How / good / receive / customer?
3. feedback / customer / online / you / given / ever / Have?
4. should / a / for / support / Who / company / in / contact / customer / your?
5. was / a / experience / memorable / you / had / as / What / a customer?

5. Answer the questions in exercise 4.

6. Correct the mistakes.

1. Do you satisfied with our customer service?
2. Who did recommend you this company?
3. What are you like about our products?
4. How often you buy online?
5. Where did you went yesterday?
6. What does customer loyalty?



7. Use the expressions below to soften the messages (a-e).

- Sorry about that.
 - Well, actually ...
 - Sorry, but ...
 - I'm afraid that...
 - Unfortunately,...
- I'm sorry to say that...
 - There might be a slight problem with...
 - I understand your point, but,...
 - That may not be the best...
 - It seems like...
- a. We don't have this item in stock.
 - b. We can't give you a refund.
 - c. Your customer service is bad.
 - d. We can't repair it.
 - e. The shipping address is wrong.

8. Put the conversation in the correct order.

1. ____

2. ____

3. ____

4. ____

5. ____

6. ____

7. ____
- a. **Customer Support:** I'm very sorry about that. What exactly is the problem?

b. **Customer:** It stopped working only two days after I bought it. I'd like a refund, please.

c. **Customer Support:** Hello, what can I do for you today?

d. **Customer:** There's a problem with the product I bought last week.

e. **Customer Support:** I'm sorry, but we can't offer a refund after use. However, let me check if we can offer you a replacement or repair.

f. **Customer:** That would be helpful, thank you.

g. **Customer Support:** I'll look into it and update you shortly.

