




# Making and Handling Complaints

Source: <https://www.speakconfidentenglish.com/responding-to-complaints-in-english/>

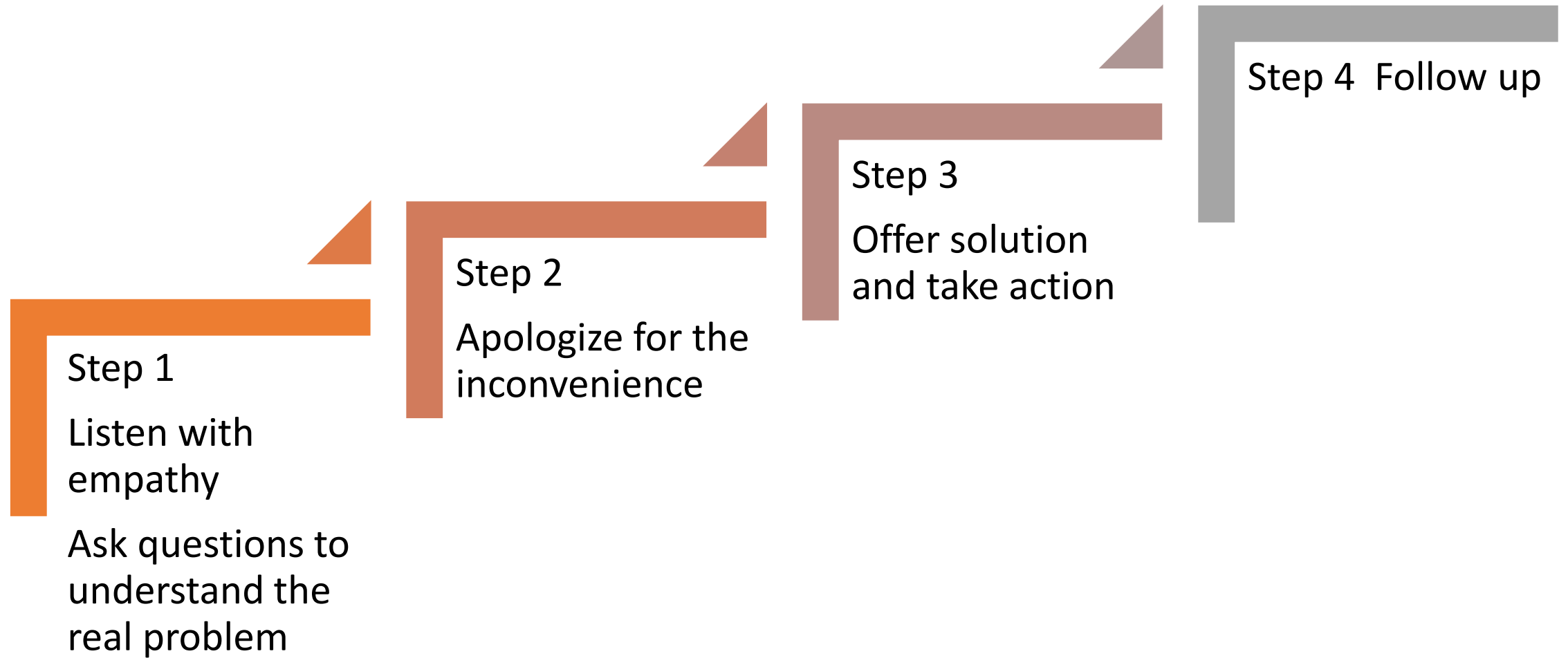
A woman and a man are sitting at a desk, looking at a document. The woman is holding a red pen and pointing at the document, while the man looks on with a concerned expression. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office setting.

## What do customers usually complain about?

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- “I bought your product, and it **didn’t work.**”
- “You sent me the **wrong type** of product.”
- “I received **broken product.**”
- “I was **overcharged** by \$30.”
- “I couldn’t find **anybody to help** me.”
- “I’ve been **waiting** here forever.”
- “I keep **getting shuffled** from one person to another.”

# Steps



# Step 1: Listen sympathetically

- Yes, your customer is angry, upset, frustrated, mad, disappointed, etc. It is not fun, but it is necessary to listen.
- In English, we have several ways to show we are listening. We can use small words and sounds to acknowledge their problem or show we understand, such as:
  - *Uh-huh*
  - *Mhm*
  - *I understand...*
  - *Yes, I see...*
  - *Ok.*
- You can follow-up these words and filler sounds with these questions and comments to **get the details of the problem and clarify**:
  - *Could you **tell** me a little more about why/how/what happened...?*
  - *Could you **clarify** what you mean when you say...?*
  - *Can you tell me exactly what happened...?*
  - *I'd like to **summarize** the situation to make sure I understand everything correctly.*

# Step 2: Apologize

- This is maybe the most important (and most difficult) step. Your customer wants an apology, more than anything. **A sincere apology.**
- Here are several common expressions we use in English to do that:
  - *I'm **really sorry** to hear that. I understand how difficult/frustrating/disappointing that would be.*
  - *I **sincerely apologize**. We/I/The company would like to repair the damage (or resolve the situation).*
  - *I **apologize** for the inconvenience/the problem.*
  - *I'm terribly **sorry**. We will work to resolve the problem immediately.*
  - *I understand why you are upset/angry/frustrated. We are going to solve this as quickly as possible.*
  - *I'm really **sorry**. We're going to take care of it right away.*

# Step 3: Take Action

- Now it is time to **take action, to do something about the problem!**
- Depending on the situation, you will need different expressions to help you take action. In some cases, you made to repair a product or provide a refund. Maybe you will need to provide a service or resolve a conflict.
- Use these following expressions to help you create the best action plan for your situation.
- \*Did you notice many of these statements start with "Let me..."?
- This is another way to say "Please allow me ..." or "Would you allow me ..." It is more informal and much more common to say, "Let me..."
- **Let me\*** talk with my manager to see what we can offer you to amend the situation. Would it be okay if I call you back in a few hours with a solution?
- **We will** send a repair person immediately (or as soon as possible). Let me confirm your location.
- **I'd be happy to** walk through all the steps you need to repair the issue. (Common for software problems or technical problems discussed over the phone)
- **We'll issue** a refund immediately to resolve the issue.
- **Let me check** with the manufacturer (or the shippers or the programmers) to see what happened so we can fix this. I will get back to you as soon as I know what happened.
- **Let me review** this situation so I can identify the best solution. I will get back to you within 24 hours.
- **Let me discuss** this with my manager/supervisor/sale team and get back to you later today with a solution.

# Step 4: Follow Up

- How do you show the customer that you really do care or that he/she is truly valuable to your company? **Follow-up** after you resolve the problem to make sure the customer is satisfied. You can follow-up with a quick phone call or email message.
- You can use these questions and statements below to check on your customer and make sure everything is ok:
  - *I just wanted to follow-up with you regarding [the problem] – did the repairman fix the issue?*
  - *Did everything work out ok with [the solution to the problem]? I just want to make sure you are satisfied.*
  - *Was the problem resolved successfully? Is there anything else we can help you with?*
  - *Was everything satisfactory? Do you have any other concerns?*
  - *Please be sure to let us know how we can help you if any other issues occur.*

For audio explanation, you can go to the following link:

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=255&v=znGci0chZ7w&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=255&v=znGci0chZ7w&feature=emb_logo)





For audio dialog  
click the  
following link

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# Dialog 1

A: Excuse. Can I talk to the manager, please?

B: I'm the manager. What can I do for you?

A: **I'm afraid we have a problem with** your latest delivery. It arrived three days late again ...

B: **I'm very sorry about that. I'm afraid** our driver was delayed at the border.

A: Well, this is about the tenth time that this has happened this year and **we are not satisfied**. If this problem is not resolved, I'm afraid we will have to consider changing supplier.

B: **I understand**. Leave it with me. **I will look into** the matter **and** do what I can to make sure it doesn't happen again.

A: **Thank you**. I really hope we can sort this out.

B: Certainly. We will give you 10% discount for the next shipment.

A: Thank you.

# Questions for Dialog 1

- What's the customer's problem?
- What's the possible reason for the problem?
- How many times has this happened?
- How does the customer feel about this?
- What will the customer do if the problem is not resolved?
- What will the manager do to resolve the problem?

# Dialog 2

- A: Hello Jane. I'm calling because we have a problem with our order.
- B: Oh, what seems to be the problem? Didn't you receive all the goods you ordered?
- A: Well, we received everything, but some of the goods are damaged.
- B: I'm sorry to hear that. In what way are they damaged?
- A: Well, the casing on some of the television sets seems to be cracked.
- B: Oh, I am very sorry. This has never happened before. It must be due to bad handling. If you send us back the damaged sets, we'll send you replacements immediately and give you a discount on your next order.
- A: Thanks a lot.
- B: I apologize again for any inconvenience caused. If you have any more problems, please let me know.

# Questions for Dialog 2

1. What's the customer problem?
2. How did the mistake happen?
3. What should the customer do to get replacement?
4. What else will the manager do to fix the problem in addition to give replacement?
5. Does the customer have any more problem?

# Dialog 3

- A: Hello, John. I'm calling about a mistake on our invoice. It looks like you have overcharged us by 50 pounds.
- B: I'm sorry about this. Our Account's Department must have made a small mistake when they processed your order. We'll issue a corrected invoice immediately.
- A: I tell you what. Could you just subtract the extra amount from the next invoice?
- B: Certainly. I apologize again for the mistake.
- A: It's all right. Have a nice day.

# Questions for Dialog 3

- Why is the customer calling? What seems to be the problem?
- What probably caused the problem?
- What will be done to resolve the problem?
- What is the suggestion from the customer to resolve the problem?

# Dialog 4

- A: Can I have a word with the manager, please?
- B: Yes, that's me. How can I help you?
- A: Well, I just want to complain about the lack of customer service here.
- B: I see. Can you tell me what happened?
- A; I just can't find anyone to help me choose a laptop.
- B: Yes, I'm very sorry madam. We are rather short-staffed now. Please wait here and I'll find someone to help you.
- A: Ok. Thank you. I'll wait here.



# Questions for Dialog 4

- What's the customer's problem?
- What happened?
- What will the manager do to solve this problem?
- Is the customer willing to wait?

# Role play

## Dialog 5 (Customer and store manager)

1. Problem: Damaged laptop bought last week.
2. Solution: Give replacement

## Dialog 6

1. Problem: Missing items on the last order (No computer cable)
2. Solution: Send the missing cable and give discount voucher for the next purchase

# Summary

## Step 1

Listen with empathy

Ask questions to understand the real problem

- Can/could you tell me what happened?
- Can/could you clarify what happened/what you mean when you say “....”?

## Step 2

Apologize for the inconvenience

- I’m really sorry for the inconvenience
- I apologize for the inconvenience.

## Step 3

Offer solution and take action

- Let me ....
- I/We will ....

## Step 4 Follow up

- I just wanted to follow up with you regarding ....
- Did everything work out well?

# Thank you!

- EXIT TICKET

- What do you say to apologize? (To apologize, we can say “\_\_\_\_\_”.)
- What do you say to ask for clarification? (To ask for clarification, we can ask questions, such as “\_\_\_\_\_?”)
- What do you say to offer a solution? (To offer a solution, we can say “\_\_\_\_\_”)

- Post-Assignment

- Audio recording of a role play – find someone to be your partner in the role play
- Name the file with your name and your partner
- Upload it on to the Post Assignment folder in moodle.