

10.2 *Effective complainers*

Aim: Develop reading skills such as understanding vocabulary in context and making inferences

Preparation: Make one copy of Worksheet 10.2 for every S.

Comment: Use after or in place of the reading on page 87.

A

- Give each S a copy of the reading. Ask Ss if they ever make consumer complaints. Elicit answers.
- Explain the task. Ss work individually to check the statements and read the article.
- Have volunteers compare their opinions with those of the author.

B Pair work

- Explain the task. Tell Ss to look back at the article to find the answers that complete the sentences.
- Ss work in pairs to complete the sentences.
- Go over the answers as a class.

Answers

1. Most companies want to solve your problem because a happy customer is a repeat customer.
2. Gather available information and read the details so that you understand company policies.
3. The more charming you are, the more likely it is that the customer service agent will want to solve your problem.
4. When writing to a company with your complaint, write in a friendly yet professional tone.

C Group work

- Explain the task. Read the questions aloud.
- Ss work in small groups to discuss their experiences.
- Have groups share their experiences with the class.

A How do effective complainers handle complaints? Choose the sentences you agree with. Then read the article and compare your ideas to the author's.

- ☐ They stay calm.
- ☐ They always complain in person.
- ☐ They know their rights.
- ☐ They are aggressive and demanding.
- ☐ They work to establish a personal connection.

Got a Complaint? Take a Deep Breath and Be Nice!

You've just checked your credit card account to find you've been overcharged for a purchase. Or maybe you've just discovered your new smartphone has suddenly stopped working. How do you feel? Of course, you are upset. You're probably even angry. Take a deep breath. Whether complaining in person, over the phone, via an online chat, or by email, anger is not going to get you what you want. What you want is your credit card balance corrected or your smartphone to work. How can you make that happen?

Effective complainers set aside their feelings and do their homework. What evidence is there that you've been overcharged? What protection policies does your credit card company offer? Is the smartphone still under warranty? If it is, what is covered and what is not? Gather available information and read the details. Take a moment to remember that companies want to help you solve your problem because a happy customer is a repeat customer. Then before you take the next step, take another deep breath.

Whether complaining in person, over the phone, or in an online customer service chat, you are speaking with a human being, so remember to be respectful. Work to establish a personal connection by using the person's name if available and if it seems appropriate. Then calmly describe your problem and use

your knowledge of the company's policies to explain how you hope to have your problem resolved. Whoever you speak with will most likely be more willing to help you if you are friendly and polite. In fact, the more charming you are, the more likely it is that the customer service agent will want to assist you. He or she may also be more willing to share your concerns with a supervisor who has more authority to solve your problem.

The same rules hold true for written complaints sent to a company by email, social media, or mail. Remember, a person is going to read your complaint. Avoid casting blame, do not be ironic, and do not make threats. Write in a friendly yet professional tone. Clearly describe your problem, include relevant information about the company's policies, and explain what you would like done about the problem. Give a deadline. Then conclude your letter in a professional manner with a phrase like "Sincerely" above your name.

A negative experience with a company's product or service can be very frustrating, but it doesn't give you the right to be rude or offensive to a customer service agent, who certainly isn't responsible for the problem. Ultimately, being friendly and polite may be what is needed to get your problem solved quickly and pleasantly. Here's to becoming an effective complainer!

B Pair work Complete the sentences with information from the article.

1. Most companies want to solve your problem because _____.
2. _____ so that you understand company policies.
3. The more charming you are _____.
4. When writing to a company with your complaint _____.

C Group work Discuss your experiences making a complaint. How effective were you? Do you think you would have been more effective if you had read this article first? Share your answers with the class.