

Unit 6: Handling Problems and Complaints

Day 1

Objectives:

Customer Service Skills	Job Readiness Skills	Grammar and Pronunciation Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the characteristics of different kinds of sale events.• Suggest additional merchandise.• Role Play: Suggest additional merchandise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build interview skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give reasons using adverbial phrases beginning with the word <i>because</i>.• Demonstrate control of simple expressions for offering suggestions.

Materials/Preparation:

- Student Book Unit 6
- Tape
- Flipchart paper [if needed for warm-up]
- Copies of **TG 6:26**, *Role Play Cards: Suggest Additional Merchandise*, cut into cards.

Key Vocabulary:

anticipate
suggest/suggestion

Notes to Instructor:

The responses to today's interview question, *Do you have any questions for us?*, are often challenging for students. There is a larger amount of class time devoted to this question than usual because the appropriateness of asking about money and benefits often comes up, and these issues take more time to discuss and practice. In preparation for class, be sure to read the instructor notes that accompany that activity.

Warm-up: Sale Events

25 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students to get out their homework from the previous class – the ads for different kinds of sales that they wrote. Remind students that they should not have written the name of the type of sale (sale, promotion, coupon, etc.) on the ad itself. It would be good if they also didn't have their name on it.

Ask them if the assignment was easy or hard to complete, and check to see if they have any questions.

Process

2. Ask students to hand in the ads. Tape them all to the board in the front of the room, and write a number next to each one. Leave a little room at the top of the board.

3. Ask students to get out a piece of paper, and number it with the number of ads that are hanging on the board. For example, if there are 10 ads on the board, each student will have a paper numbered #1-10.

4. As a class, review the types of sales you discussed in the previous class session. Write them along the top of the board or (if there is no more space on the board) on a piece of flipchart paper.

sale special promotion coupon clearance

Include also, for contrast: *regular price merchandise*

5. Then, ask students to come up to the board with their papers and look at the ads their classmates created. They must not speak! In silence, they should look at the ads and write on their papers the kind of sale that they think each one advertises. When they are finished, then can go back to their seats.

6. After everyone is back at their seat, take each ad down in sequence and hold it up for the class. Ask students to call out the kind of ad they think it is. If there is disagreement, encourage them to discuss it as a class, giving the reasons for their opinion using adverbial phrases beginning with the word *because*. Encourage students to discuss how they know it is advertising a clearance, sale, coupon, etc. Afterwards, have the author of the ad explain what kind of ad it is.

Repeat this process for all the ads.

Wrap Up & Transition

7. Practice the pronunciation of the sale terminology once again. Remind students that a good sales associate will know when and where these are happening in their store, and what merchandise is involved. In this way, they can make useful *suggestions* to customers about sale items.

Transition from this reminder to the presentation below by pointing out that making suggestions is an important part of the role of a sales associate.

Presentation: Suggesting Additional Merchandise

20 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students if they have ever purchased an item, brought it home, and realized that they needed something additional to make the item work. Get students' stories. If nobody can think of an example, ask them if they have ever bought a child's toy and then realized later that they needed to buy the batteries separately.

Process

2. Point out that a good sales associate *anticipates needs*. In other words, the associate thinks about what other items the customer will need in order to fully enjoy the item he is buying. The sales associate can then *suggest additional merchandise*. Write the italicized terms on the board.

Point out that most customers think this is helpful, as long as the associate isn't too pushy.

3. Ask students what they would suggest if a female customer were buying a dress. Elicit their ideas and write them on the board. Here are a few examples:

Woman's dress: scarf, jewelry, shoes, hat, bag

4. Repeat this process with the example of dinnerware:

Silverware: napkins, tablecloth, silver polish

5. Now that students have come up with ideas about what to suggest, turn their attention to how to suggest it. Ask them what language they would use to suggest these items to their customer. Discuss their ideas and elicit or suggest the following polite openers for suggestions:

Do you need... a tablecloth to show off that new dinnerware?

May I interest you in... a pair of earrings that match that dress?

Have you thought about...some silver polish to keep that silverware looking nice?

Practice & Feedback

6. Practice the pronunciation of these sentences and polite openers, first as a group, and then in pairs briefly. Circulate to listen and give individual feedback.

Wrap Up

7. The next activity will give students controlled practice in suggesting additional merchandise. Transition them to that activity and leave the polite openers on the board for them to refer to later.

Activity: May I Interest You In....

25 minutes

Set Up

1. Tell students that they will now have an opportunity to think about what they might suggest when their customers buy certain items.
2. Ask students to open to **SB 6:2**, *May I Interest You In...*, and read the instructions. Call on a volunteer to read the instructions out loud.

Process

3. Ask students to pair up and come with all the suggestions they can think of to go with each product. They should write all the items in the second column. Circulate to assist and give feedback.
4. Then, ask students to take turns suggesting the additional items to their partners, using the polite openers on the board. By the time they have finished, each student should have used each of polite suggestion openers many times. Encourage them to get as much practice as possible.
5. Circulate among students to assist and give individual feedback on pronunciation and intonation. Remind students about earlier lessons in the class when you discussed a polite tone of voice. Model this for the class if necessary.

Transition

7. Once all students have had many opportunities to practice the pronunciation and intonation of these suggestions, transition students into the less-controlled practice (role plays) below.

Role Play: Suggest Additional Merchandise

45 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students to get into pairs. Give each pair one of the cut cards from **TG 6:26**, *Role Play Cards: Suggest Additional Merchandise*. Ask students to read the scenario together and make sure they understand it.

Process

2. Ask students to take a few minutes to decide what items the sales associate should suggest to the customer in their scenario. Tell them to jot down the items on a separate sheet of paper.
3. After students have decided on the item to suggest, they should choose roles and begin to practice the role play. Circulate to assist and give feedback on appropriate language, pronunciation, tone, body language, and other factors we have discussed in class.

4. When the pair has successfully performed their role play for you, give them another card and ask them to repeat the process, this time switching roles. By the end of the activity, everybody should have had at least one chance to play the sales associate.

Performance & Feedback

5. If time allows, ask each group to role play *one* of their scenarios for the class. Encourage students to give each other constructive feedback and encourage the role play participants themselves to reflect on what they feel they did well and what they would still like to improve.

Interview Activity: Do You Have Any Questions For Us?

45 minutes

Note to Instructor: Students should always have a few questions prepared for the interviewer. They should write them down before the interview and carry them to the interview in their black portfolio folder. These questions show that the interviewee is prepared, has done some research about the company/store/position, and is interested in the position. Interviewees should try not to ask questions that they could find the answers to via research. For example, a question like, “What do you sell in your store?” is not appropriate because the interviewee should already know this answer before the interview. Also, interviewees should avoid asking about money, benefits, holidays, breaks, employee discounts, etc. This is generally true in the United States, though it is not always the case in other countries. Students should be made aware of this potential cultural difference. All these topics can be addressed once an offer is made or in a second interview. Students should prepare questions that both show they have done their research and show that they are serious about their future in the company.

1. Write the interview question on the board:

Do you have any questions for us?

2. Introduce this question as a common interview question. Tell students you’d like them to work in pairs for about 5 minutes to discuss and write appropriate answers to this question.

3. Before they begin, ask them to name the “Four Rules” for answering interview questions, and jot them down on the board as they are volunteered. They are:

- a. Always be positive (about self and others)
- b. Speak clearly and simply (and not too fast!)
- c. Be informative but brief
- d. Give examples

4. After students have worked for about 5 minutes, elicit possible answers from the group. Discuss the appropriateness of each answer and write 1-3 particularly good answers on the board. Consult the notes on each question (below) for suggestions and guidance. As a whole class, practice the pronunciation of the appropriate answers. Students can write the good answers on **Portfolio Workbook P:12**.

5. Ask students to return to their pairs and **practice interviewing each other** with the question on the board. Encourage them to play the part of the interviewee by smiling, making

eye contact, speaking clearly, and practicing good sitting posture. Circulate and listen to the pairs, assisting where necessary.

Appropriate answers to this interview question:

“What type of training is available to new employees?”

“Could you describe a typical day in this position?”

“What are some of the challenges in this position?”

Note to instructor: It is generally the case in the U.S. that discussions of money and benefits are avoided in the first interview, unless the interviewer brings them up. However, our students often interview for retail and entry-level positions, many of which have non-traditional interview formats. In a few instances, our past students have been invited to participate in on-the-job training in a store, without ever receiving a formal job offer and information about pay rate. Take time to explain to students that, in most instances, a job offer will be made and discussions about pay and benefits can be held at that time, before they accept the offer. If the job offer is not made, they should not begin work until they have had a polite discussion with the supervisor regarding pay. If the supervisor does not initiate that discussion, then they will have to. Take time in class to discuss appropriate, polite ways to bring up money in these situations.

Wrap Up

5 minutes

Ask students to tell you what the main topics of today’s class were. Write them on the board as they are mentioned. Check for comprehension and ask students if they have any questions.

Tell students that today’s interview question was the last of the “common” interview questions that we will cover. In our next couple of interview practice activities, we will role play entire interviews involving all the questions we have practiced in class! This will help us review all the answers we have worked on and help us become more comfortable in interviews.

Unit 6: Handling Problems and Complaints

Day 2

Objectives:

Customer Service Skills	Job Readiness Skills	Grammar and Pronunciation Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggest additional merchandise.• Explain returns policies to customers.• Read and explain warranties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for permission politely.• Role Play: The Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate control of simple expressions for offering suggestions.

Materials/Preparation:

- Copies of **TG 6:28**, *Helpful Suggestions Cards*, cut out and stacked.

Key Vocabulary:

damage
defect/defective
guarantee
manufacturer
refund
repair
replace
return policy
warranty
valid
void

Warm-up: Helpful Suggestions

20 minutes

Set Up

1. Remind students that in the previous class they practiced suggesting additional merchandise to customers. Elicit the three polite suggestion openers you practiced in the previous class and write them on the board:

Do you need...?
May I interest you in...?
Have you thought about...?

Process

2. Ask students to get into pairs and give each a face-down stack of *Helpful Suggestions Cards* from **TG 6:28**. Tell students they should take turns pulling a card from the stack and, playing the customer, tell their partner they are ready to buy the item. The partner will make a helpful suggestion, and the customer can either accept or reject it.

3. Model the activity in front of the class at least once. In the demonstration, pretend to rent a video and let a student volunteer make a suggestion to you. Afterwards, you may want to write the dialogue on the board for students to refer to during the warm up:

Customer: *Excuse me. I'd like to rent this video.*

Sales Associate: *Certainly, ma'am. I can help you. Do you need popcorn to go along with that?*

Customer: *Good idea! Thanks.*

4. Circulate among pairs as they do the activity, giving feedback on the suggestions and on sales associates' responses and pronunciation.

Reportback & Feedback

5. Briefly review some of the students' suggestions for some of the items on the cards. Ask for a few volunteers to role play their brief conversations for the class. Give individual feedback, encourage the class to do the same, and encourage the role play participants to talk about what they feel they did well and what they could improve.

Presentation: Handling Returns

20 minutes

Set Up

1. Tell students that this unit deals with handling problems and customer complaints. Angry customers are often a source of worry for students in the class. Remind students that, just like they have learned throughout the course, a sales associate should maintain the “customer service attitude” even when dealing with problems, complaints, and angry people. You may even wish to tell students to try to remember the “Three P’s”: Polite, Professional, and Patient, when dealing with complaining or angry customers.
2. Point out that the class will discuss and practice strategies for dealing with angry customers in the next class session. For now, we are going to focus on dealing with defective merchandise and *returns*, which are often sources of customer complaints. Write *returns* on the board.

Process

3. Ask students to try and remember a time when they had to return something. Why did they return it? How did the store respond? Get students’ stories. Take the opportunity to introduce the term *defective*. Write it on the board and practice the pronunciation. Customers often return *defective* merchandise to the store, but that is not the only reason people return items. What are other reasons?

You may also want to ask students about whether it is difficult or easy to return items in their countries of origin. It is usually more difficult in students’ native countries.

4. Point out that it is the sales associate’s responsibility to know the store’s return *policy*. Write the word *policy* on the board and practice the pronunciation. Each store’s return policy will be different.
5. Ask students to open to **SB 6:3**, *Return Policy*, and read the policy in Part A. Then, ask students the following comprehension questions:

What is the name of the store? [Smith’s Department Store]

How long can a customer keep an item before returning it? [30 days]

If a customer gets angry, can you make an exception and accept a return on a clearance item? [No.]

Transition

6. Point out the fact that a sales associate must be firm about the store’s policies. However, they can still be polite and helpful while doing so. Use that point to transition into the activity below, in which students can think about ways to inform customers politely about a return policy.

Activity: Explain the Policy

25 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students to return to **SB 6:3, Return Policy**, and read Part B. Point out that it is a good idea to explain the return policy to customers before they leave the store, especially if they are buying items that cannot be returned (like sale items) or that are often not able to be returned once they are used (like shoes).

Process

2. Ask students to get into pairs and answer scenarios #1 and 2 on the worksheet. They should discuss their answers first, and then write them.
3. Circulate to assist and give individual feedback about students' ideas, as well as their spelling and grammar.

Reportback & Feedback

4. Bring the class back together and elicit each group's response to each scenario. As a class, discuss the merits of each and write the best response (or fusion of several responses) for each question on the board.

Here is a suggested response for each scenario:

1. *"I just want to let you know that our store would be happy to accept a return on these shoes if they are returned to us within 30 days from today and if they have not been worn outside."*
2. *"These are some great deals on Independence Day items. I just want to remind you that we cannot accept returns on clearance items."*

Wrap Up

5. As a final point, tell students that when a customer returns an item, the sales associate can listen actively to why he is returning it. Can you offer him a similar product, but in a different size, color, or brand? The sales associate should always try to be helpful and satisfy the customer, even (and especially!) after a return.

Presentation: Warranties

15 minutes

Set Up

Note to Instructor: This presentation contains a lot of new vocabulary and information. As you make the points outlined below, write the italicized words on the board as they are introduced, make sure students understand their meanings, and practice their pronunciation.

1. Transition from the previous activity into this one by pointing out that sometimes customers buy items, bring them home, and then discover they have a *defect* or *damage*. Sometimes an item breaks after the store's return period has expired.

2. Point out that a sales associate can help a customer in these situations by being aware of a service called a *manufacturer's warranty*.

Process

3. Ask students if they know what a warranty is.

Warranty: A promise from a company that an item will work properly for a certain length of time. It protects customers in case of damage, defect, or other problems.

4. Ask students if they have any experience with warranties. Get students' stories if possible and use them to make the following points about warranties:

- In order for a warranty to be *valid*, the customer fills out a warranty card for the product and mails it directly to the manufacturer. Usually, this must be done within a certain time period.
- The warranty is usually limited. That means that it is for only a certain period of time, and under certain circumstances. If the customer does something with the product that is not allowed by the warranty, then the warranty is *void*.

Wrap Up

5. Go over the new vocabulary on the board. Practice the pronunciation of the new words as a group, and make sure everyone in the class understands their meanings. Here are the words and their definitions (except for *warranty*, listed above):

manufacturer: the company that made the product

defect: a mistake

damage: the product has a broken or destroyed part

valid: legal; all good.

void: not legal; not good anymore

Transition into the next activity by asking students to turn to **SB 6:4, *A Limited Warranty***, and look at the examples of an actual warranty.

Note to Instructor: Note that students may not understand the difference between *warranty* and *guarantee*. Some students may believe they are the same word because of the similar pronunciations. Take the time to make sure students clearly understand the differences between them in both meaning and pronunciation.

Activity: Reading a Warranty

30 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students to open to **SB 6:4**, *A Limited Warranty*, and just skim the warranty that appears here. Then, ask them the following pre-reading questions:

What product is under warranty here? [a computer]
What is the name of the manufacturer? [Zap Computers]
What three words do you see listed in bold? [repair, replace, refund]
Why do think they called this warranty “limited”?

Process

2. Ask them to take about 5 minutes to read the warranty in Part A (they shouldn't do Part B yet).
3. After everyone has read Part A, bring the class back together and ask if there are any questions about what the warranty means. Discuss the questions as a class.
4. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the instructions for Part B. Make sure students understand the instructions. Then, pair them up and ask them to work together to complete Part B.

Reportback & Feedback

5. Bring the class back together and call on volunteers to review the answers. [There should be a check on #2, 4, and 5]. If there are any questions or confusion, refer students back to the text to find the answers.
6. Write at least the following three vocabulary words on the board and discuss their meaning as a class:

repair [fix]
replace [provide a new one]
refund [give money back]

Practice the pronunciation as a group.

Wrap Up

7. Point out that one must read warranties and other policies very carefully and be aware of their components so that they can explain them accurately to customers. As this example illustrates, they can contain complicated language and fine distinctions in meaning. Also, the National Professional Certification in Customer Service Exam, which students will have the opportunity to take after the class is over, has several questions that rely on careful reading of policies.

Role Play: The Interview

50 minutes

Set Up

1. Remind students that for the last few weeks, they have learned about and practiced at least seven common interview questions. Ask them to try to recall all the questions they have practiced, and write them on the board. Here are the seven that have been covered in this curriculum:

Tell me about yourself.

Why should we hire you for this position?

Why do you want to work for our company?

What are your weaknesses?

Give me an example of a problem you had at a previous job. How did you resolve it?

Why did you leave your last job?

Do you have any questions for us?

Process

2. Tell students that today's role play is going to help them put together everything they have learned about interviews. They are going to take turns role playing an entire interview with all the questions on the board, including appropriate greetings, handshakes, and leave-taking.

3. Before they get started, ask students to once again list the "4 Rules" of answering interview questions. Write them on a piece of flipchart paper or refer them to the list that you already have posted:

- a. Always be positive (about self and others)
- b. Speak clearly and simply (and not too fast!)
- c. Be informative but brief
- d. Give examples

4. Pair students up. Ask them to decide who will play the interviewee the first time they do the role play. They should also decide what customer service position they will interview for, and with which company. All this must be clearly decided before the role play begins.

5. All interviewees should step outside the classroom door. All interviewers should turn to their **Portfolio Workbook P:13** and review the 7 interview questions they should ask their partner when they come back in. Remind interviewers that they should stand to greet their interviewee, shake their hand, and ask them to sit down. At all times, they should play the role of the interviewer (i.e., they should not break character, but instead try to stay as serious as possible in order to give their partner realistic practice.)

6. Tell the interviewees in the hallway that they should walk in to the classroom, find their interviewer, and greet him or her appropriately. They should shake hands firmly and wait until they are invited to sit. They are going to answer 7 interview questions and must take the role play seriously, as if it really is an interview, in order to get realistic practice. Their interviewer will not stop pretending that he or she is really an interviewer.

7. Allow interviewees to go in the classroom and begin the role plays. Circulate to listen, but try not to interrupt an interview role play in session unless the role play seems to be breaking down. Take notes on problems or other issues that arise.

8. After each role play is finished, encourage the interviewers to give feedback to their partners about what they felt they did well, and what parts they think could be improved. Give individual feedback where possible. Help the pair switch roles and begin again.

Reportback & Feedback

9. After all students have played the interviewee at least once, bring the class back together. Ask students to tell you how they felt it went, and what they still feel they need to improve. Bring up the problems and issues you noted while you were listening.

Wrap Up

10. Tell students they will have at least one more opportunity in class to practice the entire interview. They should try to practice at home in order to improve for the next role play.

Wrap Up

5 minutes

Review the day's topics as a class, and ask if there are any remaining questions or concerns. Tell students what they can expect in the next class session.

Unit 6: Handling Problems and Complaints

Day 3

Objectives:

Customer Service Skills	Job Readiness Skills	Grammar and Pronunciation Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to complaints. • Deal with angry customers. • Explain customer complaints to supervisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give advice and suggestions to co-workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use modals to offer advice and make suggestions, with attention to register. • Use embedded statements to report speech.

Materials/Preparation:

- Copies of **TG 6:29**, *Giving Advice at Work – Conversation Cards*, cut into cards and stacked.
- SSLC Audiotape, *Broken Dinner Set*
- Copies of **TG 6:30**, *Angry Customer Role Play Cards*, cut into cards.

Key Vocabulary:

apologize
empathize
complaint

Notes to Instructor:

An important part of today's lesson is the introduction of a strategy for dealing with complaints and, especially, angry customers. This is often a topic that causes much concern among students. Be sure to point out to them that very angry customers are actually relatively rare; though customer complaints can be common. To prepare for this lesson, read the detailed strategy explanation in this unit (starting on page **6:17**) at least a couple times. You may wish to give some examples from your own customer service experience (or your experience as a customer.) Before you present the associated language for each step of the strategy, give students the opportunity to come up with the language themselves.

Once or more during this unit, you may also want to point out that if a customer complains, he or she wants you to do something about the problem so that he or she can come back. If the customer leaves dissatisfied, but does not say anything, he or she most likely will not return.

Warm-up: Giving Advice

25 minutes

Set Up

1. Mention to students that we have focused a lot on being polite and professional to customers, and we will talk even more about this today. However, we should remember that an important part of work is, of course, to be polite and professional also towards our co-workers, supervisors, and, if we have them, staff. Point out that they might have to give advice and suggestions to co-workers and supervisors, and take advice and suggestions from them as well.

Process

2. Elicit some proper language for giving and taking suggestions and advice. Tell students you have the following problem:

My boss wants me to work late on Wednesday, but I have dinner plans already with a friend. What should I do?

3. Ask students to give you suggestions and advice. Get their ideas and encourage them to express them politely using hedges like *I think...* and the modals *should* and *would*, and *If I were you....* Also, model appropriate ways to accept or deflect suggestions and advice. Write the sample openers and responses on the board. For example:

I think you should...
If I were you, I would...

That's a good idea, thanks.
Thanks for the advice, but....

4. Emphasize that it is important to give advice and suggestions politely in this way, and respond politely as well, in a workplace setting – even if they advice and suggestions were not asked for!

5. Ask students to get into pairs. Give each a pair a face-down stack of conversation cards from **TG 6:29, Giving Advice at Work – Conversation Cards**. Instruct them to take turns pulling a card and telling their partner about their “problem” from the card. They should not look at all the problems at once. Encourage them to take the opportunity to get a lot of conversation practice in English.

6. Circulate among students to listen, assist, and give individual feedback. Encourage students to ask follow-up questions based on their partner’s responses, and to respond politely.

Reportback & Feedback

7. Bring the class back together. Follow up by asking volunteers to role play a few interactions, and discuss the answers as a class. Poll students to get a range of opinions on some of the problems. Discuss the appropriateness of responses.

5. Practice the pronunciation of the openers and responses on the board. Give individual feedback on pronunciation.

Transition

6. One of the problems in the stack involves angry customers. Ask students for their suggestions related to this problem last. Use the class discussion of the responses to transition into the next presentation.

Presentation: Dealing with Angry Customers

30 minutes

Set Up

1. Transition from the previous discussion into this presentation by asking students what advice they would give a co-worker who had to deal with angry customers often. Elicit students' ideas and write them in brainstorm fashion on **one side** of the board.
2. Ask those students who have worked in customer service to tell any stories they have about dealing with difficult, complaining, or angry customers. What happened? How did they handle it? If possible, it might be useful to point out that while some customers do get angry, they are usually not the norm.

Process

3. After eliciting their ideas and stories, tell students that, of course, it is important to be polite and professional toward customers, even the angry and complaining ones. However, it is also helpful to have a strategy for dealing with those customers; that is what we'll discuss today.

Note to Instructor: Below you will find the main steps of a strategy to deal with complaining or angry customers. The main steps are in bold, and some points to make about each step, and some associated language are listed below the step itself. In this presentation, take students through the strategy, writing at least the main steps and the associated language on the board. Encourage student discussion throughout the presentation by asking about their own experiences dealing with customers, and ask them how they (as customers) would like to be treated in such a situation. It may be helpful to lead students into pointing out that there have been times when they, too, have been angry or frustrated as customers – how would they like to have been treated in such a situation?

Here is the outline for the strategy presentation:

1. Listen actively.

- One of the best ways to calm a customer down is to listen to them. Often, that is all it takes.
- Do not interrupt. Let the customer tell his or her story, even if it takes a while.
- Make sure you understand all the parts of the problem. Ask polite, open-ended questions if necessary.
- Make eye contact and say thing like, "I see", to show the customer you are listening.

2. Apologize & Empathize.

- Even if the problem is not your fault in any way, you must still apologize and take responsibility for the problem, as the representative of the store.
- Make it clear that you feel badly because they do – this is called empathizing.
- Be sincere and make eye contact.
- Here are some things you can say:
 - “I’m so sorry about this.”*
 - “I’m so sorry about this inconvenience.”*
 - “I understand that this is frustrating.”*
 - “That would upset me, too. I’m so sorry.”*

3. Do not react.

- It is important to remain calm. This will help the customer stay calm. If you react to the customer’s rudeness, you may make the situation worse.
- Stay Polite, Professional, and Patient [the “Three P’s”].
- Never raise your voice. In fact, it often helps to lower your voice a little, to gently remind the customer to do the same.
- At the same time, be sure that the customer understands that you do understand the importance of the situation. Do not smile at this time. Be calm and kind and serious while you help the customer.

4. If possible, fix the problem.

- First, find out what the customer wants.
- If the customer does not know what he or she wants, suggest possible fixes.
- It is important to stay firm when stating the company policy, while still being polite.

5. If possible, offer something.

- It is sometimes possible to offer something small to make the customer feel better. For example, a coupon, a discount, or a waiver of shipping fees.
- Make sure you are allowed to do this, according to your store’s policy.

4. Point out that students should go to the manager only if the sequence outlined above does not calm the customer down and/or satisfy him or her. Dealing with complaints is part of a sales associate’s job, so they must have skills for handling them without a manager present. (However, if a customer demands to see the manager, the sales associate should get the manager.)

HOWEVER: if the sales associate ever feels afraid or threatened by the customer, then by all means, go to the manager. Being threatened is not part of the job, and the sales associate has a right to stay out of harm’s way. The customer has no right to verbally (much less physically) abuse the sales associate. This is rare, but if it happens or if the sales associate fears that it may, he or she should immediately call a supervisor or, if necessary, security.

5. Ask students the following question:

After the customer has been satisfied and has left the store, what else should you do?

Elicit their responses. Make sure students understand that when the customer leaves the store, the problem usually does not stop there. They must try to make sure the problem does not happen again. That will certainly always involve telling the manager about the problem. It may also involve taking other steps to correct one's own procedures or suggesting other ways to make sure this problem can be avoided in the future. That is the sales associate's job, too.

Wrap Up

6. Review the main steps in the sequence one more time. Ask students if they have any questions or concerns about this process.

Listening Activity: Broken Dinner Set

30 minutes

Set Up

1. Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to hear how a good sales associate handling a customer complaint. Ask them to listen for examples of the steps outlined in the previous presentation.

Process

2. Play the taped segment, *Broken Dinner Set*. After students have heard it once, ask the following comprehension questions:

*Why is the customer upset? What happened?
Why did the customer need the product on the weekend?
What does the sales associate do to make the customer happy?*

3. Play the taped segment again. Ask students to listen for the answers to the following questions (write them on the board):

*When was the delivery?
How can the customer return item?*

After students have heard the tape again, ask them for their answers to these questions.

4. Ask students to open to **SB 6:5, Handling Complaints**. Tell them you play the tape at least once more. They should listen for the expressions that the sales associate uses to calm the customer down and satisfy her, and write what they hear. You may have to play the tape a fourth time in order for students to have time to write down all the expressions.

Reportback & Feedback

5. After most students have written a majority of expressions, ask the class what they found. Here are the expressions they should have written down:

I'm sorry to hear that. What seems to be the problem?
Oh no!
I'm terribly sorry. Would you like us to replace the item?
I'm sorry.
It sounds like it really caused you some problems.
Is there anything you'd like us to do?
Again, I'm so sorry about this.
Thank you – I hope you'll come back again.

6. After you have the expressions on the board, ask students what step of the strategy they learned earlier is represented by each of these expressions.

Wrap Up

7. Practice the pronunciation of the expressions on the board, first as a group, and then in pairs. Circulate to assist and give individual feedback, reminding students about the use of thought groups, pauses, and intonation. Finish the practice by calling on individuals to say some of the expressions for the class.

Role Play: Angry Customers

45 minutes

Set Up

1. If possible, leave the steps of the strategy on the board for students' reference. Tell them they will now have the opportunity to practice dealing with angry customers. Tell them that each student will have a chance to use the strategies we discussed. Each student will also have the opportunity to play an angry customer! Ask them to be realistic in their portrayals, and to calm down eventually in the role play – we want each “sales associate” to have a successful experience by the end of the role play.

Process

2. Ask students to get into pairs. Give each pair a scenario card from **TG 6:30, Angry Customer Role Play Cards**. Ask them to take a minute to read their scenario and make sure they understand it. Ask them also to decide who is going to be the first to play the sales associate.

3. As students work on their role plays, circulate among them to assist and give feedback. Make sure that the angry customers do eventually relent and allow themselves to be at least somewhat satisfied. Work with the sales associates to make sure they are utilizing the steps in the strategy for dealing with angry customers. You may need to model some interactions in order to help students see how they can do them better.

Performance & Feedback

4. Have pairs perform in front of the class. Afterwards, ask their classmates to give feedback on what they did well and what they could improve. Do the same yourself, and make sure to ask the participants themselves what they feel they did well, and what they feel they could improve.

Presentation: Report the Problem

15 minutes

Note to Instructor: The grammar of reported speech was already introduced in Unit 4, in the presentation and activities on taking messages. This presentation and subsequent activity are therefore reviews.

Set Up

1. Remind students about discussion earlier in the class, when they talked about what they should do after the once-angry customer leaves the store. What should they do to finish dealing with the problem? Students should mention that one thing they should do is report the problem to the manager.

Process

2. Use a few of the cards from the previous role play to help students practice reporting a customer's complaint to the manager. For example, remind students that in one of the previous role plays, the customer said something like,

The flour I bought has insects in it!

Write this statement on the board.

3. Ask students what they would say if they had to report this problem to the manager. Elicit:

The customer said that the flour she bought had insects in it.

4. Point out (or ask students to point out) that when you report the customer's statement to the manager, you have to change a few things. First, you have to change the subject of the customer's statement (I changes to she). Second, you often have to change the tense of the reported statement. When then customer says the statement, it may be in the present tense...but you are reporting what the customer *said*, in the past, so your report needs to be in the past tense.

5. Illustrate these two rules with a few more examples. Write the following statements on the board and ask students to work individually to change them into reports to the manager.

You delivered the wrong flowers to the funeral!

I am not satisfied with the service I have received here!

This DVD player doesn't work. You should accept the return without a receipt.

Reportback & Feedback

6. Review the answers as a class by calling on volunteers. Write the reported speech on the board.
7. As a class and then individually, practice the pronunciation of the reported speech. Give feedback to individuals where possible.

Activity: Report the Problem

20 minutes

Set Up

1. Ask students to get into groups of 3 or 4. Give each group a face-down stack of *Customer Complaint Cards* from **TG 6:31**.
2. Explain that, in this activity, students should sit in a circle or semi-circle as much as possible. One student will draw a card and read the complaint on the card to the student sitting to his right. That student will in turn report the message to the student sitting to his right. Then, that student will draw the next card and repeat the process.

Process

3. As students begin, circulate among them to listen. Try not to interrupt, but at the end of the interaction, give feedback if necessary. Assist and give feedback both in grammar and in pronunciation.

Reportback & Feedback

4. Bring the class back together, into a semi-circle. To review the activity, repeat it, using the entire class. That is, the student sitting closest to your right will begin by pulling a card, reading the complaint to the person to his right, etc., until everyone in the class has had at least one turn.
5. Give feedback on grammar and pronunciation. Ask students if they have any questions.

Unit 6: Handling Problems and Complaints

Day 4

Objectives:

Customer Service Skills	Job Readiness Skills	Grammar and Pronunciation Skills
• REVIEW	• REVIEW	• REVIEW

Materials/Preparation:

- Copies of **TG 6:27**, *Angry Customer Conversation Cards*

All other materials should be chosen by in the instructor based on students' review needs and desires.

Notes to Instructor:

Today is a review day and may be used to review the material covered in the last two units (5 and 6). The content of this day is left to your discretion. Review those topics and skills that students would like to delve into further, or that you feel students need to practice more.

It is recommended that you do at least one more money transaction role play today in class – perhaps a combination of check, cash, and credit card transactions. You may also wish to set aside time today for students to work on personality tests and online applications while you are there to help.

A suggested warm-up is provided for today's class which reviews and builds upon the previous class session's "angry customer" topic. An additional review activity is provided for today's class: *Responding to Customers' Signals*, **SB 6:6**. This worksheet helps students review this important Unit 5 topic.

Finally, you may also wish to give students another opportunity to role play dealing with angry or complaining customers. Ask students to invent scenarios based on their own experiences, practice them with a partner, and perform them for the class. Invite the class to give feedback on the role plays and use these discussions as an opportunity to further reinforce the strategy for dealing with angry customers that students learned in the last class session.

Warm-Up: Angry Customer Conversation Cards

15 minutes

Set Up

1. Remind students about their discussion in the last class regarding angry customers and how to respond to them. Ask them to brainstorm some of the strategies they discussed. Ask them to remind you of the “Three P’s” guidelines for dealing with complaints and angry customers [patient, polite, and professional].

Process

2. Ask students to get into groups of three and give each group a face-down stack of *Angry Customer Conversation Cards* from **TG 6:27**. Ask them to take turns pulling a card from the stack and asking each other the questions. Encourage students to take the opportunity to practice conversing in English as much as possible.

3. Circulate among the groups to assist and give individual feedback. Encourage students to ask each other follow-up questions to keep the conversations going.

Reportback & Feedback

4. Bring the class back together and call on volunteers to review their group’s answers to a few of the questions. Take the opportunity to reiterate important points made in the previous class about how to deal with angry customers.

Activity: Responding to Customer Cues

Set Up

1. Write the words *buying signals* on the board and ask students if they remember what this term means [the things a customer says and does to show she is ready to buy.] Ask students if they can give any examples of buying signals.

Process

2. Ask students to get into pairs, open to **SB 6:6**, *Responding to Customers’ Signals*, and read the instructions there. They should work together to decide upon the best response in each of the scenarios.

3. Circulate among groups to assist and give feedback.

Reportback & Feedback

4. Bring the class back together, poll students on their responses, and discuss the answers. Encourage student debate if there are any different answers for any of the questions. The answers for this worksheet are listed below :

1. **c**
2. **b**
3. **c**, or in some cases, **d** (**d** is a “once in a blue moon” technique)

Note to Instructor: For more information on the pros and cons of each of the responses to this worksheet, see Crisp Workbook 7: Closing the Sale, pp. 47-50.

Role Play Cards: Suggesting Additional Merchandise

<p>The sales associate works in a book store. The customer comes in and tells the associate that he (or she) loves mystery novels and wants to buy a new one to read on vacation. The sales associate helps him (or her) find the book. After the customer decides to buy it, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps him (or her) choose it.</p>	<p>The sales associate works in a shoe store. The customer comes in and tells the associate that she (or he) loves to jog and needs to buy a new pair of running shoes. The sales associate helps her (or him) find a good pair of shoes. After the customer decides to buy them, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps her (or him) choose it.</p>
<p>The sales associate works in a cell phone store. The customer comes in and tells the associate that he (or she) lost their cell phone and needs to buy a new one. The sales associate helps him (or her) find the right cell phone. After the customer decides to buy it, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps him (or her) choose it.</p>	<p>The sales associate works in a hardware store. The customer comes in and tells the associate that she (or he) needs to buy a flashlight for home use. The sales associate helps her (or him) find a good flashlight. After the customer decides to buy it, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps her (or him) choose it.</p>
<p>The sales associate works in a flower shop. The customer comes in and tells the associate that he (or she) wants to buy a big, beautiful bouquet of flowers for Mother's Day. The sales associate helps him (or her) find the right bouquet. After the customer decides to buy it, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps him (or her) choose it.</p>	<p>The sales associate works in a gardening store. The customer comes in and tells the associate that she (or he) needs to buy a shovel for the garden. The sales associate helps her (or him) find a good shovel. After the customer decides to buy it, the sales associate suggests additional merchandise and helps her (or him) choose it.</p>

Angry Customer Conversation Cards

<p>What are some good strategies to calm down angry customers?</p>	<p>Your customer has been waiting in line for a long time and she is very annoyed. What should you do?</p>
<p>What should you do if a customer is rude to you?</p>	<p>A customer asks you a question and you don't know the answer. What should you do?</p>
<p>A customer keeps getting more and more irate. Nothing you say makes the customer calm down. What should you do?</p>	<p>Have you ever been an angry customer? If so, what happened?</p>

Helpful Suggestions Cards

shoes	cold medicine
personal portable CD player	camera
vacuum cleaner	deli sandwich with salad
bird feeder	winter coat

Giving Advice At Work – Conversation Cards

<p>I have a problem with my boss. She is mean and always grumpy. What do you think I should do?</p>	<p>The store is always so busy – I am so stressed out! I don't know what I should do.</p>
<p>English is not my first language, and I am having real problems communicating at work. My co-workers always talk very fast and use a lot of slang. What do you think I should do?</p>	<p>I need to apply for a job using the internet, but I'm not very good at using the computer. What should I do?</p>
<p>I really hate my job. I am always unhappy when I am at work, and I think about the job a lot when I am at home. What do you think I should do?</p>	<p>I work at the returns desk in a big department store, and I have to deal with a lot of angry and complaining customers. I am afraid of them! How do you think I should handle this?</p>

Angry Customer Role Play Cards

<p>You work in a grocery store. A customer is upset because she bought a bag of flour from the store and it has insects in it. She wants to know if she can have a refund.</p>	<p>You work in a florist. A customer had come in to the store last week to order some flowers for a funeral, but the wrong kind were delivered. The customer is very irritated.</p>
<p>You work in an electronics store. A customer wants to return a DVD player, but he doesn't have his or her receipt. The customer is becoming annoyed.</p>	<p>A customer has bought a new television set from your store, but when he gets home, he find that it does not have the features he wanted. He is not satisfied with the service at your store.</p>
<p>A customer has bought a lamp at your housewares store. When he took it home, the lampshade became very hot and started to smoke. The customer is very offended that your store sold him a fire hazard!</p>	

Customer Complaint Cards

My television does not have all the features I wanted!

I can't believe you sold me a fire hazard!

I demand a full refund!

I want to talk to your manager!

I have been waiting in line for twenty minutes!

You told me there would be a new shipment in today!

My shipment has not arrived, and it has been over a week!