

Dealing with problems and complaints responses card games

Instructions for teachers

Photocopy one copy of the worksheet per student to take away, plus one copy per group of two to four students to be cut up into playing cards.

Cut up one pack of cards per group of students, with the bold ones on the left hand side divided from the ones of the right and the latter group of cards shuffled up.

Give out just the left-hand cards (questions) first of all, and ask students to brainstorm possible responses in their groups.

Then give out the other cards (responses) and ask them to match them up to the original question cards. If they get stuck, tell them that there should be three responses for each question.

Give out un-cut-up copies for them to check their answers, and answer any questions they have, e.g. if other matches are possible.

To practise the language, play a selection of these games:

- One student reads out a question, and the others try to make as many different responses as they can (not necessarily the ones in the pack)
- One student reads a response and the other students try to make a question that could produce that response (not necessarily the one on the worksheet)
- One student reads out a question, and their partner then chooses and reads out one of the responses. They then continue the conversation for as long as they can. After a few minutes of that activity, they can do a more difficult version by hiding the responses and trying to have long conversations with just the questions as prompts.
- Students deal out the whole pack of cards and try to say as many of those things as they can while having a reasonably natural conversation. If they say something on one of their cards, they can discard that card. The person who discards most cards is the winner.

Cards to cut up/ Suggested answers

<p><i>The room that I was supposed to use for my lecture today was double booked with another professor.</i></p>	<p>I'm really sorry about that. Is there anything we can do to make up for that?</p>	<p>Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused. Did you find a solution?</p>	<p>Oh, I do apologise. If you can give me all the details, I'll make sure that it never happens again.</p>
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<i>I'd like to make a complaint against my professor.</i>	Oh, I see. Do you mean an official complaint?	I'm sorry to hear that. Just a moment and I'll write all the details down. What is his or her name?	Oh, okay. Is this an anonymous complaint, or are you happy for your name to be used?
<i>I'm not very happy with the Pre-Intermediate level German course.</i>	I'm sorry to hear that. What's wrong with it exactly?	Oh, really? What seems to be the problem?	That's a shame. What aspect of it aren't you happy with?
<i>The problem is that the class is much too easy for me.</i>	Hmm, that is a problem. So, what do you think might be a best solution?	I see. In that case, have you thought about...?	I can see how that might be a problem. Do you mean that you should be in a higher level class?
<i>I understand your concern, but I'm not sure exactly how we can help you.</i>	Could I possibly cancel the course and take another one next semester?	If possible, I'd like you to pass my complaints onto the professor.	That's okay. There's no need to do anything. I just wanted you to know there's a problem.
<i>Given that situation, can I have a refund?</i>	I'm afraid that is not possible. However, I can offer you...	Of course. If you can give me your credit card number, it should take three or four days.	I'm sorry but I don't have the authority to decide that. I'll contact...
<i>Thanks for your help.</i>	Thanks for letting us know. We'll do our best to make sure this doesn't happen again.	Thanks for your understanding. Please contact me again if the same thing occurs.	Thank YOU. And once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for the trouble caused.

**Dealing with problems and complaints responses card games
Brainstorming stage**

Without looking above for now, brainstorm suitable phrases into each of the categories below. Phrases which aren't above are also fine as long as they fit into that category.

Complaining/ Explaining problems

Apologising/ Saying sorry

Sympathising/ Sounding sympathetic (so not actually apologising)

Asking for more information about the complaint

Asking for action (politely)

Talking about solutions to that problem (including things that they can do themselves)

Promising to do something/ Talking about future actions

Negative responses (maybe with alternative ideas)

Thanking at the end of the conversation

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Brainstorming stage suggested answers

Ones in italics below are not in the dialogues above but are also useful. Ones in italics with NOT and X are not correct or don't have that function. Many more answers are possible, so please ask your teacher if you wrote something different above.

Complaining/ Explaining problems

The problem is that...

I have a problem with...

I'm not (very) happy with...

... is (much) too...

... isn't... enough.

I'd like to make a complaint about/ against...

I was supposed to..., but...

I'm not really satisfied with...

I expected..., but...

Apologising/ Saying sorry

I'm really sorry about that.

Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Oh, I do apologise.

I'd like to apologise for...

(First of all), let me say how sorry I am for...

(Once again) please accept our (sincerest) apologies for the trouble caused.

(NOT I'm afraid... X)

Sympathising/ Sounding sympathetic (so not actually apologising)

I'm sorry to hear that.

Oh, really?

That's a shame./ *That's a pity.*

Hmm, that is a problem.

Right, I can see how that might be a problem.

I can understand that you wouldn't be very happy with that.

That sounds terrible/ horrible/ awful.

(NOT I see X NOT I understand X)

Asking for more information about the complaint

What's wrong with it exactly?

What seems to be the problem?

What aspect of it aren't you happy with?

Do you mean...?

Just a moment and I'll write all the details down. Wh...?

If you can give me all the details (...)

(I understand your concern, but) I'm not sure (exactly) how we can help you.

So, if I understand you correctly, the problem is...

Would you mind giving me some more details?

How can I help you with that?

Is there any way we can help with that?

Asking for action (politely)

Could I possibly...?

If possible, I'd like you to...

(Given that situation), can I...?

According to the contract, I should be able to get...

I think I deserve...

In this kind of situation, it seems normal to me to...

Talking about solutions to that problem (including things that they can do themselves)

So, what do you think might be a best solution?

In that case, have you thought about...?

Is there anything we can do to make up for that?

Did you (manage to) find a solution?

If you..., it should take...

Did you try to...?

The best solution might be to...

Promising to do something/ Talking about future actions

I'll make sure that it never happens again.

We will do our best to make sure this doesn't happen again.

I'll investigate it fully and get back to you by the end of this week.

Negative responses (maybe with alternative ideas)

I'm afraid that is not possible. (However, I can offer you...)

I'm sorry but (I don't have the authority to decide that). (I'll...)

Unfortunately it is too late to be able to do that (but you could...)

Thanking at the end of the conversation

Thanks for your (all) help.

Thank you for letting us know.

Thanks for your patience.

Thanks for your understanding.

Thank YOU.

I really appreciate all your help.

(NOT Thank you for your cooperation X)