

# PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES.- Communicative activities.

## Situation

Here are some fun facts about the history of shipping that you can impress people with, if the time arises. But frankly, if the time arises where this info comes in handy, well then you probably need to find new friends.



### Big steps in shipping and storage.

Ceramic containers for food storage date back around 8,000 years and were developed in the Middle East. Prior to that, food was primarily eaten where it was cultivated or transferred, wrapped in animal skins or grasses. Wooden boxes, barrels and crates came around 3,000 years later. They have even been found holding personal belongings in Egyptian tombs.

### The red tape ever ends.

When the Apollo 11 astronauts returned from the Moon, they had to fill out some paperwork for customs agents. You see, technically they left the United States, and as a result the astronauts had to be officially readmitted through Immigration. This led to the tedious task of filling out "Moon" after place of departure. It's not like the agents didn't know where they were. The whole world was watching!

In case you were wondering, the cargo was listed as "Moon rock and Moon dust samples". Notice that there were no aliens listed. They must have come back on Apollo 14.

### Never leave a man behind.

In 1992 a shipping container bound for the US from Hong Kong fell overboard and was lost at sea. The cargo that spilled into the ocean was 28,000 plastic duck bath toys. Those toys have been following ocean currents ever since reaching every continent but Antarctica, including surviving the Arctic Ocean and moving around North America to reach the British Isles.

Scientists have been using the data collected from ships spotting the yellow tide or duckies washing ashore to study ocean patterns and how long it takes for them to navigate the globe.

Adapted from <http://www.ernestpackaging.com/blog/2011/11/17/fun-facts-about-shipping-history/>

## Think about it

Discuss in the forum:

Do you know any anecdotes about the shipping or delivery of items?  
Have you ever had any problems with the delivery of an item?



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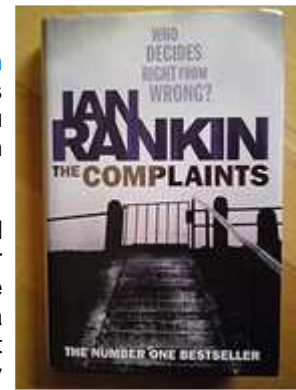
# 1.- Reading Activity.

## Handling complaints.

The first thing that you should always remember is that **nine out of ten** complaints will be about the shop, restaurant, hotel, the food, products or services you offer and not about you. Your attitude will play a vital part in how effective you are in dealing with customer complaints. Always have a positive attitude toward both the customer and the complaint.

There are key stages in how to effectively deal with both the customer and the complaint. First of all you have to be aware of what the complaints policy of your shop or restaurant is. Do you have the responsibility/authority to deal with the complaint through to its conclusion? Or do you have to pass the situation over to a colleague or superior? Don't get defensive. You do not want to get into an argument with your customer, even if they want to get into one with you. Never say "it's not my job". Politely ask the customer for their name and remember it. First of all you have to **find out** what the problem is. Ask the customer to tell you exactly what the problem is. Listen very carefully to what they tell you. It might be helpful to take notes at this stage to verify later with the customer, or, if passing the complaint over, to give your colleague the full story. **Whilst** the customer is talking to you don't interrupt or jump to conclusions. The next stage is probably the most difficult – you have to apologise! You need to empathise with the customers' feelings, in other words, you understand how they feel and that you take the problem seriously. Don't **blame** other people or say it **has nothing to do with you**.

You then have to decide what to do and take the necessary action. If you have to pass the customer and the complaint over, remember that the customer complained to you and will not want to repeat the story to someone else. Make sure you explain the problem fully. If you are dealing with the complaint yourself, make sure you follow the accepted procedures within your shop/restaurant ( **refunds**, replacing meals etc.). Always explain fully to the customer what you are doing, so they **are aware of** what is happening and why. Finally, always ask if the customer is happy with the **outcome**. If dealt with professionally and courteously you will have won your customer back.



## Now it's your turn

**Read the text and say if the following sentences are True or False.  
It doesn't depend on your attitude to be effective when dealing with a complaint.**

- True.  
 False.

**Be polite even if your customer wants to get into an argument with you.**

- True.  
 False.

**While the customer is talking, don't waste your time taking notes.**

- True.  
 False.

**If the complaint has nothing to do with you, blame your colleague.**

- True.  
 False.

**Probably, the most difficult stage is when you need to empathise with the customers' feelings.**

- True.  
 False.

**Although customers complain, they can trust you again if you deal with a complaint professionally.**

- True.
- False.

## 2.- Listening Activity.



### Now it's your turn

Now listen to the conversation and complete the gaps with the right word or words.



Script

Consumers can  apply for  payday loans, health ,  car coverage, and so much more just by clicking their mouse; with online banking you can check the state of your bank , with online dating you can find a partner, with online travel you can make  for flights...The internet offers solutions to some of the most complicated issues. This is very  and one of the most practical ways to conduct most personal and private business. You only need two important pieces of equipment: a laptop, or a desktop, and a reliable internet connection.



Electronic commerce that takes place between businesses and  is referred to as business-to-consumer or .

This is the type of electronic commerce conducted by companies such as Amazon.com. On the other hand, when electronic commerce takes place between businesses it is called  ecommerce or B2B.

The amount of trade conducted electronically has  extraordinarily with  widespread Internet usage but some people still think that online shopping has more  than real life shopping. For example, you can  products online but you never have the chance to really touch the product or try your  on.



## 4.- Speaking Activity.

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Look for a partner in the forum to role-play a situation to handle a complaint. Student A will be a customer who is not happy with an article he or she has recently bought and Student B will be the customer service representative. Then, switch roles.

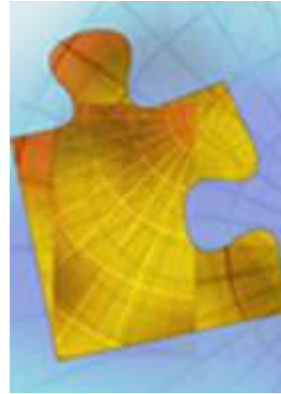
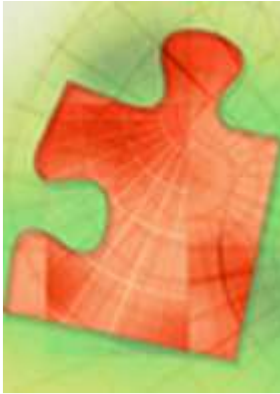
### You should know

Click on the following link where you will find sample dialogues and a list of key vocabulary.

[Customer service: Dealing with complaints.](#)

If you want to find some situations to practise responding to a complaint, click on the following link.

[Customer service: Situations.](#)



## Appendix.- Licenses of resources.

### Licencias de recursos utilizados en la Unidad de

Resource (1)	Resource information (1)	Resource (2)	
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