

## THEME 8 ALTERNATIVE ENERGY GRAMMAR

### HOW TO COMPLAIN

Imagine that you are visiting friends or family in an English-speaking country. You need to have a few pieces of clothing professionally cleaned for a party. So you take them to a **dry cleaner**. When you go to get your clothing from the cleaners, the man working there is friendly. He hands you the clothes, smiles and says, “That will be \$21.50 please.” But you see a problem. There is now a hole in your favorite shirt and your pants have changed color. You are very unhappy. But how do you express this effectively?

Most of us do not enjoy **complaining**. But sometimes we must do it to get a solution.

An effective complaint has often three steps: Explaining the problem; Stating your feelings; Asking for action.

#### 1. Explaining the problem

To do it effectively, you must use **polite**, respectful language. In English, polite language is usually indirect.

For example, if you are at a restaurant and the server forgets to bring your drink, saying, “You didn’t bring my drink” may be too direct. It may sound critical and cause the server to become defensive.

So here are a few **phrases** you can use to politely explain your problem.

**Let’s start with “I think you may have...”**

*Oh, hi! I think you may have forgotten to bring my drink.*

**Here is another opening line: “I’m sorry to have to say this but...”**

*Hi. How’s it going? I’m sorry to have to say this, but I noticed some damage to my clothing.*

**Or you can simplify it with the words: “I just noticed...”**

*Hi. How’s it going? I just noticed some damage to my clothing.*

**Here’s another useful phrase: “I’m sorry to bother you, but...”**

*Hi, there. I’m sorry to bother you, but my hotel room is a little cold.*

**Or you might say: “There seems to be a mistake...”**

*Hi! How are you? There seems to be a mistake on my billing statement. I think you may have overcharged me.*

#### 2. Stating your feelings

The second step is to say how you feel about the problem. This step is often not necessary. It will depend on how bad the problem is. Some problems have easy, quick solutions. For example, politely telling people that they forgot something or overcharged you usually leads to a speedy solution.

But imagine that you are receiving poor service at a hotel or restaurant or that a repair shop has damaged your belongings. Or, maybe there is a continuing issue at your apartment building. In these cases, you may need to express how you feel.

**Always begin with step 1 (politely explaining the problem.)**

**Then, you can use phrases like “This is...” or “It is...” followed by one or more descriptive words. Let’s hear an example of someone telling their building manager about a problem:**

*Hi Vanessa. I’m sorry to have to say this but there is still a mouse problem in my apartment. This has been an issue for three months now. It is unacceptable that the problem hasn’t been resolved.*

#### 3. Asking for action

The third step is to ask for action to be taken on the problem. This is an important step. Some people do steps 1 and 2, but forget step 3.

**Depending on who the listener is, you or they may need to ask someone else to take action. In such cases, ask for the store’s manager. Here is how you can do that in person:**

*Could I please speak with the manager?*

## And by phone:

*Could you please redirect my call to the manager?*

**Sometimes the listener can solve the problem themselves. You can use indirect questions to ask for action.**

Would it be possible to reimburse me?

Is there any chance you could turn the heat up?

## Connecting the steps

Now, let's put the steps together. Let's hear a short exchange about the damaged clothing:

A : OK. That'll be \$21.50 please.

B : Oh, gosh... I just noticed some damage to my clothing. The shirt has a hole and the pants have changed color.

A : Hmm. I cleaned those myself. I don't remember damaging anything.

B : But these pieces are new and I've only worn them once. Is there any chance you could reimburse me?

Well, we don't know how this dispute ends. But we know the complainer was polite and used steps 1 and 3. Using step 2 might depend on the manager's **response**.

Making complaints is never easy but knowing how to do it right can it a lot easier!

## Practice

### Situation 1:

You have been planning a trip for months and are very excited. But it's 12 hours of travel time, including two flights. Your first flight is delayed three times, which will cause you to miss your connecting flight. That means you will also miss a special event tomorrow at your destination. And you already bought tickets to the event. Talk to the airline worker about the problem.

### Situation 2:

Your professor puts students into small groups for a big project. The project is 25% of your final grade. You are in a group with two other people. One is a hard worker. But the other texts people a lot and doesn't do enough work. The hard working student is not bothered by the lazy student. But you are. Talk to the lazy student *or* the professor about the problem.

### Situation 3:

Your Internet company recently changed your data plan without your permission. The cost of your monthly bill is now double what it was. You have been trying to reach the billing department for a week but they keep putting you on hold for more than 20 minutes. Your payment is now late. You finally reach a representative by phone. Talk to them about the problem.

## Complaints

**1.** There is a problem that requires an urgent solution.

The factory in our neighborhood dumps waste somewhere close to the residential area.

**2.** Sorry to bother you but we have to inform you that some trees by the lake have been cut down this week. No one has seen them.

**3.** I'm sorry to tell you that the residents of the area are drinking polluted water.

## Solutions Offered

In order to solve this problem, we must first send a notification. We cannot punish straight.

I think, we should first watch the video records from surveillance cameras nearby and find out who did it.

Thank you for sharing this with us. The solution for this problem is to collect water samples for analysis.

**EXERCISES A . Match the problems and responses given to them**

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|--|--|
| 1. This hamburger is cold. I can't eat it.                       | a. Please give us another room.              |
| 2. The Internet is not working. This is unfair.                  | b. Please bring me a hot one.                |
| 3. You overcharged me for this bag. This is wrong.               | c. Could I replace it with another one?      |
| 4. This food doesn't taste good. It is disgusting.               | d. Please give me a refund.                  |
| 5. There is a fault with the shirt I got yesterday.              | e. I would like to have it connected please. |
| 6. I am not happy with the cable TV service you're providing.    | f. Please credit me for the lost hours.      |
| 7. We have no hot water in our hotel room. This is unacceptable. | g. Could I have another meal instead?        |

**EXERCISES B. Write suitable solutions for the situations given (Verilen durumlara uygun çözümler yazınız)**

e.g. He hasn't got any money **Go to the bank**

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|----------------------------|-------|
| 1. He is fat               | _____ |
| 2. His marks are bad       | _____ |
| 3. He gets up very late    | _____ |
| 4. He eats fast food a lot | _____ |
| 5. He plays games a lot    | _____ |