

## Background

### Customer support telephone calls

If you have ever telephoned customer support, you will have heard the message, 'Your conversation might be recorded for quality purposes.' Do you think anyone listens to these recordings? Well, apparently they do, but not to check for quality. Many of the calls are just funny and embarrassing. Read some of the best below.

Call 1:

Customer: I've been ringing 0830 2130 for two days and I can't get through to your holiday booking office. Can you help me?

Operator: I don't think that number is correct. Where did you find it?

Customer: It was on the door to your shop in the high street.

Operator: I think they are the opening hours. Don't worry. I'll put you through to them now.

Call 2:

Reception: Hello, Franco's Wine Bar. Can I help you?

Caller: Yes but can you speak up? I'm deaf in one ear.

Call 3:

Operator: Good morning. Quality Car Insurance. Martin speaking. Can I help you?

Caller: Yes. If I buy insurance for France, do I have to change the steering wheel to the other side?

Call 4:

Technical Support: I need you to right-click on the desktop.

Customer: Hang on ... OK, I've done that.

Technical Support: Right. So can you see the menu now?

Customer: No.

Technical Support: OK. Let's try again. Right-click again. Now do you see it?

Customer: No.

Technical Support: That's strange. And you are clicking the mouse?

Customer: No. You told me to write click. So I wrote 'click'.

Call 5:

Technical Support: OK. I'm going to ask you to go to the control panel on your computer.

Customer: I see.

Technical Support: So first of all, in the bottom left corner of your screen, there's a button. It says 'Start'. Can you click on it?

Customer: That's amazing. How can you see my computer from there?

Call 6:

Operator: Hello. Pizza-to-go.

Customer: Hi. I'd like to place an order, but I've got some questions first.

Operator: Sure. Go ahead.

Customer: Your menu says the small pizza is nine inches. How big is that?

Operator: It's nine inches.

Customer: How many slices is that?

Operator: Six slices.

Customer: But how big is that?

Operator: Well, err. Nine inches is about twenty-two centimetres.

Customer: OK. What size is the medium pizza?

Operator: Twelve inches. So about thirty centimetres.

Customer: And how many slices?

Operator: Six.

Customer: Six? But that's the same size as the small!

Call 7:

Operator: Hello. Thanks for calling Bonanza Books. Can I help you?

Caller: Yes, it's about the price of your books. How much are they?

Operator: Which book would like a price for?

Caller: No. All your books. How much do they cost?

Operator: Well, they are all different prices.

Caller: Oh. [puts phone down]

Call 8:

Customer: Hello. I have a problem. My computer is on fire.

Technical Support: Sorry. I didn't catch that. Did you say it's on fire?

Customer: Well, not exactly on fire, but there's a lot of smoke. But the real reason I'm calling is that I've never backed up my files before. If it is on fire, I don't want to lose them. What should I do?

Technical Support: I think you should unplug it from the wall and get out of the house.

Customer: But I don't want to lose everything. Can I do a quick back-up?

Technical Support: I really think you should call the fire brigade!

Customer: But ...

## Exercises

### 1 Discuss as a class.

- 1 How does your company offer customers support with your products or services? Is there telephone support or a website they can visit?
- 2 What kinds of problems or complaints do your customers have? Who is in charge of solving them?

### 2 Read the telephone calls from customers. Match the call to the area of business.

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| a insurance: _____ | d travel: _____            |
| b retail: _____    | e food and catering: _____ |
| c I.T.: _____      |                            |

### 3 Read the text again. Sentences a–h explain or describe the problem in each call. Match them to the call.

- a The caller telephones the wrong number. 1
- b The caller doesn't realize that most computers are the same. \_\_\_\_\_
- c The caller has got his priorities wrong. \_\_\_\_\_
- d The caller is uncertain about driving on the right-hand side of the road. \_\_\_\_\_
- e The caller confuses a word with the same sound but a different meaning. \_\_\_\_\_
- f The caller can't hear very well. \_\_\_\_\_
- g The caller thinks everything is the same price. \_\_\_\_\_
- h The caller needs a mathematics lesson. \_\_\_\_\_

### 4 Find expressions from the calls that mean the same as these words.

- Call 1: make contact with (on the phone) get through to
- Call 1: connect you (to someone else) \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 2: speak more loudly \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 3: this is (person's name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 4: wait one moment \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 5: I understand \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 6: start speaking \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 7: I'm calling because I want to know (something). \_\_\_\_\_
- Call 8: I didn't hear that correctly. \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Work with a partner. Read situations 1–5 and make polite sentences you can use in each situation.

**Situation 1:** A customer calls for help. Pick up the phone and answer.

**Situation 2:** You can't hear the caller very well.

**Situation 3:** You can't understand what the caller is saying.

**Situation 4:** The caller wants some prices but your price list isn't on your desk.

**Situation 5:** A caller wants to speak to your colleague but she calls your number by mistake. You can connect the caller to your colleague.

### 6 Work with a partner. Role-play this telephone call between a caller and a customer support representative.

- The representative answers the phone.
- The customer asks for the price of a product.
- The representative can't hear very well and asks the customer to repeat the question.
- The customer repeats.
- The representative looks for the price list. He / she can't find the price list and offers to connect the customer to his / her colleague.
- The customer agrees.

### 7 Look back at the text and choose three words or expressions that you could use in your day-to-day work.