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Customer service

Questions

Question forms; *yes/no* questions and short answers;
wh- questions; tag questions

A Context listening

- 1 You are going to hear a woman complaining at the customer service desk.
Before you listen, look at the pictures and answer these questions.

- 1 What was the woman's problem? _____
- 2 Was her problem solved? _____



- 2 Listen and check if you were right.

3 Listen again and answer these questions.

- 1 Where was the woman?

- 2 Did the woman want to return a product?

- 3 Why was she at the customer service desk?

- 4 She brought her guarantee, didn't she?

- 5 The woman isn't satisfied with the product, is she?

- 6 Can she complain to the phone company online?

4 Look at your answers in Exercise 3 and answer these questions.

- 1 Which questions can you answer with a *yes* or *no*? _____
- 2 Which questions ask for information? _____
- 3 In what way are questions 2 and 6 different from 4 and 5? _____

5 All the words below are about customer service. Listen and underline the words you heard in the conversation.

complaint courteous guarantee expectations defective quality reliability

B Grammar

2

The way to form questions depends on what information you want. The three common types of questions are *yes / no questions*, *information questions*, and *tag questions*.

1 Yes / no questions and short answers

You can answer these question forms with *yes* or *no*.

With *to be*, the verb goes at the beginning of the question.

verb	subject	
<i>Is</i>	<i>Julie</i>	<i>an accountant?</i>
<i>Are</i>	<i>yachts</i>	<i>expensive?</i>

When the verb is not *be* and consists of only one word, we use a form of the word *do* and the infinitive without *to*.

<i>do</i>	subject	verb	
<i>Does</i>	<i>Jack</i>	<i>work</i>	<i>in marketing?</i>
<i>Did</i>	<i>profits</i>	<i>drop</i>	<i>this quarter?</i>

3

When the verb contains an auxiliary or modal verb and a main verb, the auxiliary or modal verb goes at the beginning of the question.

aux verb	subject	verb	
<i>Is</i>	<i>Thomas</i>	<i>driving</i>	<i>today?</i>
<i>Can</i>	<i>Greta</i>	<i>make</i>	<i>copies of the report?</i>
<i>Has</i>	<i>Federico</i>	<i>worked</i>	<i>in sales?</i>

We also use negative questions to check information we think is correct. When the question is negative, the word *not* is used with the first verb.

Doesn't Fatma drive? *Didn't the newspaper come this morning?*

Isn't it a beautiful day? *Can't the workman finish today?*

The answer to a *yes / no* question can be a simple *yes* or *no*, or it can be a complete sentence. Often it is a short answer that repeats the verb that begins the question.

Is Brenda coming in today? Yes, she **is**. / No, she **isn't**.

Does the bus stop in front of the hotel? Yes, it **does**. / No, it **doesn't**.

Didn't the shipment arrive yesterday? Yes, it **did**. / No, it **didn't**.

Can't Avani contact the head office? Yes, she **can**. / No, she **can't**.

2 Wh- questions

Questions that ask for information begin with a question word (*who, what, why, where, how, when*).

When the question asks for the subject of the sentence, the word order is the same as in the statement.

Liam attended the meeting. → "**Who** attended the meeting?" "Liam."

This suitcase was left in the hallway. → "**What** was left in the hallway?" "This suitcase."

When the question requires other information (not the subject), the question uses a question word + the *yes / no* question form.

When was the contract signed?

It was signed **last week**.

Where is the mirror?

It's **in the women's department**.

How many boxes arrived in the shipment?

There were **20**.

How often does he work overtime?

He works overtime **once a week**.

3 Tag questions

We can make questions by adding a tag question to the end of a statement. In the tag question, the verb goes before the subject, like in a *yes / no* question.

To make a tag question, we use an auxiliary verb (e.g. *have, do*), modal verb (e.g. *can, should*) or the verb *to be*, and a pronoun (e.g. *he, she*). The auxiliary verb and pronoun match the statement. When the statement is positive, the verb in the tag question is negative. When the statement is negative, the verb in the tag question is positive.

+	-
Amy is representing us at the trade fair,	isn't she?
Joseph works in our Houston branch,	doesn't he?
The books have been delivered,	haven't they?

-	+
Joseph hasn't left yet,	has he?
Amy can't pick up the package,	can she?
The invoice didn't go out yesterday,	did it?

When the tag is negative and the subject is *I*, we use the auxiliary *are* in place of *am*.
I'm late, aren't I?

When the speaker uses a tag question to confirm an opinion, the speaker's voice goes down.

I don't have to write up the report, do I? (The speaker expects the answer to be *no*.)

It is difficult work, isn't it? (The speaker expects the answer to be *yes*.)

When the speaker uses a tag question to ask something, the speaker's voice rises.

I don't have to write up the report, do I? (The speaker doesn't know and is asking for this information.)

C Grammar exercises

1 Write *yes / no* questions for these answers.

1 Does the training program start tomorrow?

Yes, the training program starts tomorrow.

2 _____

No, we haven't had any complaints about our opening hours.

3 _____

Yes, maybe we should postpone the meeting.

4 _____

No, the sales representative is coming tomorrow.

5 _____

Yes, the committee decided on the new sales campaign.

2 Read the conversation and fill in the blanks with a short answer.

Mary

1 Eric, do you know where my briefcase is?

2 Did you see me carrying it when I came into the office?

3 Could it be in my car?

4 Perhaps I left it at the front desk.

5 Can you call the desk for me?

6 Why not? Is there a problem?

7 Will you tell me what's going on?
Well?

8 A new briefcase! Thank you. You remembered.

Eric

No, I don't

No, _____

Yes, _____

Maybe _____

No, _____

No, _____

Yes, _____

Happy Birthday.

Yes, _____

3 Put the words in the correct order to make the questions and choose the correct answer.

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1 this / report / typed / who | <u>Who typed this report?</u> | <u>c</u> |
| 2 Carlos / hired / was / when | _____ | _____ |
| 3 can / I / return / suit / this / where | _____ | _____ |
| 4 been / department / has / how / in /
long / Ms. Wong / the / sports / working | _____ | _____ |
| 5 Anita / did / early / retire / so / why | _____ | _____ |
| 6 do / do / in / plan / Paris / to / what / you | _____ | _____ |
- a Try customer service.
b I think she's ill.
c I did. Why? Is there a problem?
d I have a meeting with a fashion designer.
e I'd say about ten years.
f If I remember correctly, 2004.

4 Complete the conversation with tag questions.

- James: You were at the staff meeting yesterday, **1** weren't you? ?
Eva: Yes, you didn't go, **2** _____ ?
James: No, I was out of town. What was it about?
Eva: You read the email about the customer service problems, **3** _____ ?
James: No, I didn't, but someone told me about it. We've had a few complaints, **4** _____ ?
Eva: Yes, about 20, I think.
James: They were mostly about defective products, **5** _____ ?
Eva: Yes, and there were also complaints about discourteous staff.
James: Really? That can't be a big problem, **6** _____ ?
Eva: I'm afraid so. You remember when Phil shouted at a customer, **7** _____ ?
James: Oh, yes, of course. But he was fired, **8** _____ ?
Eva: Yes, he was. But, I think the management is just worried. They don't want that to happen again,
9 _____ ?

D Vocabulary

Key Vocabulary

Read this paragraph about customer service and check your understanding of the words in bold.

Every business that wants to be successful must support the products or services that they offer with **courteous**, helpful, and friendly **customer service**. Customer service involves **building a relationship** with your customers or **clients**, where you **guarantee** to repair or replace **defective** products and listen to their **feedback**. In fact, one of the most important parts of customer service is **dealing with complaints**. Complaints are an opportunity to learn about mistakes, and if you deal with them carefully, you have the chance to **regain the trust** of that customer. Customers whose **expectations** are **satisfied** and who understand your **commitment to quality** and **reliability** are more likely to return and do business with you in the future.



Vocabulary note

A **deal** can be an agreement between two parties.

*The shipping company made a **deal** with the farmers to send a truck to pick up goods two days a week.*

A **deal** can also be something that costs less than you expected.

*I got a good **deal** on the car because it used to be a company car.*

1 Complete the definitions with the words in italics.

- 1 The customer comes into a store to make a purchase, but a client is dependent on the advice and service of a business. *client / customer*
- 2 A _____ on a product is an agreement that the buyer can get money back or a replacement if the product is defective. Buyers feel better knowing that if the _____ of the product is not up to a high standard, they can get their money back. *guarantee / quality*
- 3 Companies that are _____ to providing good service look at complaints as important _____ that help them improve their products or service. *feedback / committed*
- 4 Customer _____ is important to all companies because if they don't meet the customers' _____, they will lose business. *expectations / satisfaction*
- 5 A company that provides good _____ gets the reputation of being a _____ company. *service / reliable*

- 2** A market researcher asked Monica to write answers to some questions. Read Monica's responses to the questions. Fill in the blanks with the words from the box.

complaint courteous deal with defective expectations guarantee
relationships satisfaction trust unreliable

1 What have you recently complained to a company about?

Not too long ago, a new store opened at the mall with a big promotion. I bought a coffee maker, but when I got home I discovered that the product was **1** defective. The heating plate did not heat up, so my coffee became cold very quickly. Fortunately, the coffee maker had a **2** _____.

2 How would you say your complaint was handled?

I had to wait for a while. But when the woman came to the customer service desk, she was very **3** _____ and helpful. She listened to my **4** _____ very calmly and she handled the problem very well. She took the coffee maker and gave me a new one.

3 How important is the way a complaint is handled?

I think that if a business doesn't **5** _____ a complaint quickly then it will lose the **6** _____ of the customer. We all have **7** _____ about the quality of service and products and if a business doesn't give us **8** _____ we will think of that business as **9** _____. We probably won't buy from that company again. On the other hand, if a business deals with complaints courteously and quickly, then it will build good **10** _____ with its customers.