

Making Complaints

to report a problem



A: Excuse me?
B: Yes, can I help you?
A: I hate to complain, but there's a hair on my food.
B: Oh! I'm really sorry about that. I'll replace your food right away.
A: Thank you.
B: Of course. And you won't be charged for your meal.
A: Okay, thank you very much.

Excuse me,	do you mind	being a little quieter?
		turning your music down?
I'm sorry to bother you,	can you please	be a little quieter?
		turn your music down?
I hate to complain,	but	this spoon is dirty.
		this shirt has a spot on it.

A: Excuse me. EXCUSE ME!
B: Oh, hey.
A: Yeah, hi. Do you mind turning your music down?
 I'm trying to do some work.
B: Oh! I'm sorry about that. Sure, I'll turn it down.
A: Thanks a lot. It's good. I'm just very busy right now.
B: No problem. I work a lot too.
A: What do you do?
B: I write children's books.
A: Really? That's interesting.



Making Complaints: to report a problem

This worksheet is used to focus on easy ways to make polite complaints. It's difficult for some people to do this, because of their personality or their culture. In many cases making even a simple complaint can be quite a challenge. The importance here is to show how the phrases can be used to help yourself in certain situations and that the cultural difference or stigma some students may associate with complaining isn't necessarily felt by others.

How to use the worksheet.

1. Elicit a situation when students might need to complain. My favorite is the old, hair in the food situation. Not just an eye lash or something small. I mean, a big, thick, black long hair that just can't be avoided. What would the students do? Another great one would be if they got a brand new computer that didn't work when they got it home, or a glass that was cracked. In cases like these it's easy to get students to say just what they would do.

2. Give your students some simple phrases to drill.

3. Look at the conversations here on the worksheet. You might notice that in the last example, the two people end up in an interesting conversation.

4. If they are up for it, try running a role play.

5. Either at the start or end of the class, have students talk about complaining. Have they ever complained about anything? What was it? What do they think about people who complain. What sorts of things shouldn't people complain about?

Doing this at the start of the class is a great way to identify any cultural sensitivity on the issue.

Note:

I've also made a great worksheet that shows how we might use simple complaints to start conversations. This might be a better way to start in case you have particularly sensitive students. I may seem like I'm being oversensitive about that but I've had a number of students who said they were really uncomfortable with the idea of complaining and I made it a point to include them in discussions about cultural differences and the role of complaining. In the end, they turned out to be some of the best complainers in the class!