

OXFORD Business English

# English for Customer Care

Rosemary Richey

EXPRESS SERIES



OXFORD

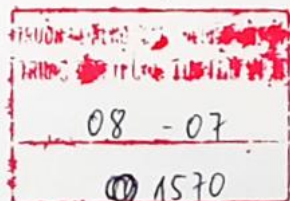


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Rosemary Richey



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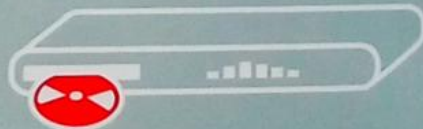
**MultiROM**

**English for Customer Care** is accompanied by a MultiROM  
which has a number of features.

**Interactive exercises** to practise useful phrases, vocabulary,  
and communication through your computer.

**Listening extracts.** These are in enhanced audio format that  
can be played on a conventional CD-player or through the  
audio player on your computer.

If you have any problems, please check the technical sup-  
port section of the readme file on the MultiROM.



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## About the book

**English for Customer Care** has been developed for people working in customer service who need a good level of English. You might be working in the sales or customer service department of a company, or you might have direct contact with customers in a bank or hotel. Or perhaps you speak to customers on the telephone from a helpdesk or a call centre. In all of these situations you need language skills and specific techniques in order to be able to communicate successfully. **English for Customer Care** not only offers expressions and vocabulary, it also addresses strategies related to the effective use of English in a business context.

**English for Customer Care** consists of six units. The first unit offers an introduction to the basic principles of Customer Service. The following four units deal with various different forms of customer contact: face to face meetings, telephone calls, call centres, or written communication. The final unit presents speaking skills that are needed in order to solve problems and deal with customer complaints effectively.

Each unit begins with a **Starter**, which consists of small exercises, brainstorming activities, or a quiz. This is followed by dialogues, texts, and authentic documents, along with a variety of exercises that help you to learn the vocabulary and expressions in context. You will be directed to the **Partner Files** at various points in the units, where role-play information gap activities allow you and a partner to practise the language presented in the unit in realistic situations. Each unit ends with a text which relates to the topic of the unit and leads to discussion. When you have worked through all the units you can **Test yourself!** with a crossword on the vocabulary in the book.

The **MultiROM** contains all the **Listening extracts** from the book. These can be played through the audio player on your computer, or through a conventional CD-player. In order to give yourself extra listening practice, listen to it in your car or copy it to your MP3 player. The **Interactive exercises** let you review by doing exercises that cover the essential language from the book, this will be particularly valuable if you are using the book for self-study.

At the back of **English for Customer Care** there is an **Answer key** where you can check your answers. You will also find the **Partner Files**, the **Transcripts** of the listening extracts, an **A-Z word list**, and a list of **Useful phrases and vocabulary** that you can refer to while you are at work.

## 1

## Introduction to customer care

### STARTER

People have strong opinions about customer care. What is important for you as a customer? Work with a partner to make a list of the kind of services you expect.

Notes

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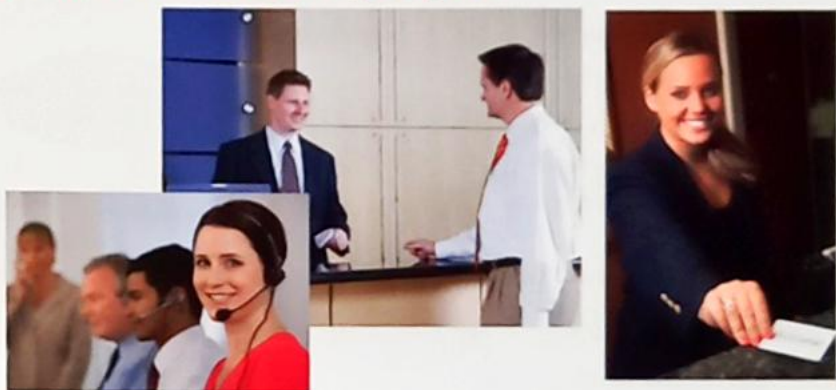
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- 1 Read about the importance of customer care in the article and find four word partnerships with *customer*.

customer

Can you add any other words to make more partnerships?

Think about the most successful shopping sites on the Internet. What do they have in common? Whether you are booking a holiday, buying books and music or simply doing the weekly shop, the best sites provide the highest levels of customer satisfaction. How do they do it? Why is customer care such a priority?

For most shoppers, customer convenience is the most important factor. Up-to-date technology means that when you return to a site you have visited before, they will remember your name, your profile, and what you bought last time. They also track where you browsed and what you thought about buying. They can also make some recommendations about other places, titles, or products.

We demand customer-friendly navigation and the best sites provide it, continually raising their levels of service. Convenient and efficient payment systems are also essential.

Sometimes, of course, things go wrong but this is when the sites are even better at dealing with customers. You can call a helpline and talk to an agent, email your problem and get a reply within twenty-four hours or even get assistance via an instant messaging conversation. The people in charge of customer relations know that we want to shop, maybe purchase, and then leave with a very positive impression of the site. A satisfied customer is a good customer. Good customers remain loyal and recommend you to others.

**According to the article, what makes an online shopping site successful?  
Complete this list.**

Notes
1 <i>customer convenience</i>
2
3
4
5

## 2 Find a word in the text that means the same as:

- |                                       |       |                        |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| 1 profitable                          | _____ | 5 absolutely necessary | _____ |
| 2 something of the highest importance | _____ | 6 help                 | _____ |
| 3 easy or helpful to use              | _____ | 7 faithful             | _____ |
| 4 fast and organized                  | _____ | 8 suggest              | _____ |

**Now use words from above to complete the sentences.**

- Our customers' satisfaction is our top \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you need \_\_\_\_\_, please contact our call centre.
- Good communication skills are \_\_\_\_\_ in any customer care job.
- And you can pay by credit card, which is very \_\_\_\_\_ when shopping online.
- We can offer a quicker and more \_\_\_\_\_ level of service with our new call centre.
- If you are happy with our products, please \_\_\_\_\_ us to a friend.

## 3 You are in a meeting with a possible new customer. Answer their questions.

Q What makes your company different?

A We are very proud of our \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>.  
We're especially known for our \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>.

Q How do you make it easy and convenient for the customer?

A We offer convenience to the customers with  
\_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>.

Q What is the most important focus for your customers?

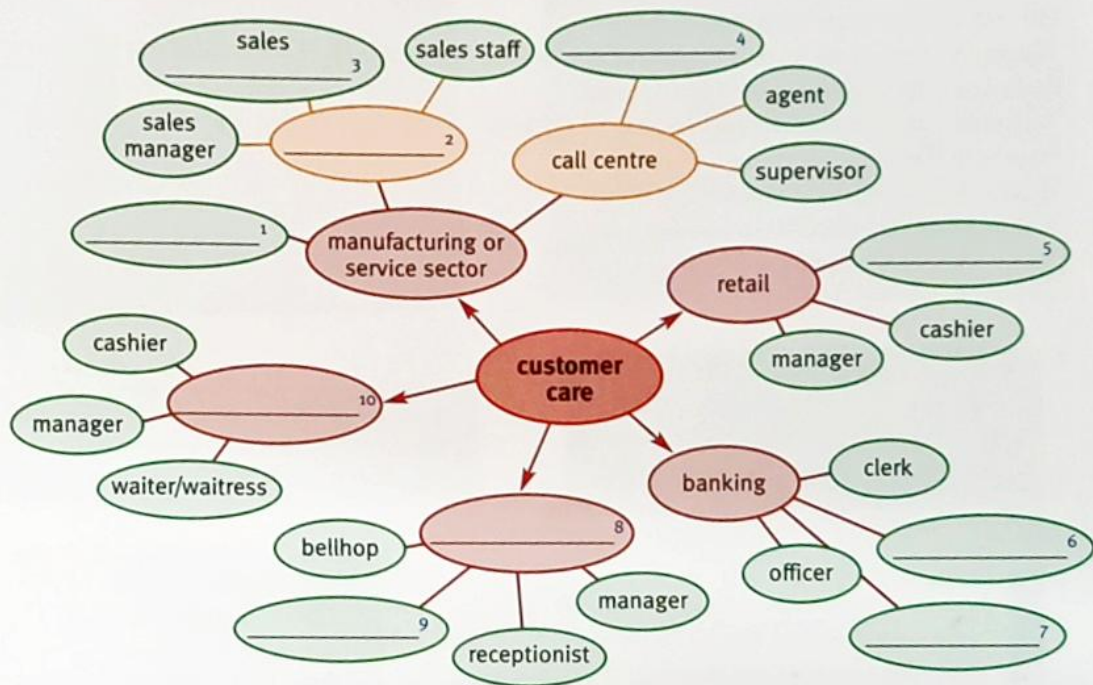
A Our top priority is to \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup>.

Q How do I get after-sales service?

A We give efficient customer service by  
\_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>.

**4 Complete the spidergram on customer service-centred businesses and jobs with words from the list.**

cashier • concierge • hotel • order entry clerk • receptionist • representative • restaurant • sales • shop assistant • teller



**Is your job or business area on the spidergram? If not, add it. Can you add another customer care position?**

**5 Now find people in the spidergram that complete the statements below. More than one answer is possible in each case. Compare your answers with a partner.**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ deals with customers in person.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ is responsible for helping customers choose the right product.
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ handles customer questions or problems over the phone.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ takes care of after-sales service.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ processes product orders for customers.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ often has to write to customers.

- 6 Look at the news flash and the extracts from five job advertisements. What kind of 'people' skills do the adverts mention? Complete the notes.

**NEWS FLASH** Are technical skills enough?

Customer care is becoming more and more focused on IT training. It's true that nowadays technical skills are essential for working with customer service systems. However, this high-tech training is not enough for good customer care. Employees also need people skills so that they can deal with people in all kinds of customer situations.

Notes

*good telephone manner*

- 1 You must be fluent in German and English with a very good telephone manner and good customer service skills. PC skills and good communication skills are required.

- 2 Customer care and communication skills are essential. Ability to perform effectively under pressure and to work as part of a team.

- 3 Your role is to provide customers with first-class customer care. Duties: handling telephone enquiries and complaints; making calls to customers; dealing with correspondence by email and letter. Computer skills and good writing skills required.

- 4 We need someone with the ability to communicate clearly with customers and work effectively with both internal and external teams.

- 5 You will need experience of communicating face to face with customers, using tact and diplomacy.

**What kind of skills do you need for your job? Write a job advert for your position.**

- 7 Here are some comments taken from customer service questionnaires. Mark them **positive** [P] or **negative** [N].

- 1 'Your sales staff are impatient. They never wait for people to finish speaking and are always in a hurry.' ☐
- 2 'The people working at your call centre are always so polite and helpful. And they always take the time to answer all my questions.' ☐
- 3 'I wish your employees would be more attentive. They don't seem to listen to what I say and don't care about me at all.' ☐
- 4 'The bank officer took care of my requests straight away. I didn't have to wait at all.' ☐

- 5 'When I arrived at your hotel, I was totally ignored by both the bellhop and the receptionist.'
- 6 'The clerk was really rude and pretended not to see me.'
- 7 'The waiter was well informed about the the menu and was prompt in bringing my food.'
- 8 'Your service was more than I asked for. That really made me feel special.'

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

## 8 Complete the table with opposites from exercise 7.

positive	negative
<i>to be attentive</i> _____ 1	to ignore somebody
to take the time	_____ 2
polite	_____ 3
_____ 4	uninformed
_____ 5	too slow
patient	_____ 6
_____ 7	unhelpful
_____ 8	ordinary

**Now use words from the table to complete these sentences from a customer care handbook. Sometimes more than one answer is possible. Compare with a partner.**

- a Customers always expect you to be \_\_\_\_\_.
- b If you are \_\_\_\_\_ to customers, they will not do business with you again.
- c Being \_\_\_\_\_ always makes a bad impression on customers or guests.
- d You should be \_\_\_\_\_ about the services or products you provide.
- e A call centre agent should never be \_\_\_\_\_ on the phone and should always be \_\_\_\_\_.

## 9 Tell your partner about one positive and one negative customer care situation you have recently experienced. Make a list of suggestions to improve negative service. Use phrases from the Language Box below in your discussion.

### USEFUL LANGUAGE

#### Making suggestions

Why don't you ...?

Don't/Wouldn't you agree that ...?

Isn't it a better idea to ...?

It makes a good/bad impression if they/you ...

#### Responding to suggestions

That's right./I agree.

I see your point.

I disagree because ...

I don't agree. I would ...

## OUTPUT

How much do you know about customer care? Mark the following statements Agree **A** or Disagree **D**. Then read the article to see how your answers compare.

- 1 Customers do not tell their friends and colleagues about bad customer care experiences.
- 2 The product itself is more important than the service behind it.
- 3 Good, friendly service will keep customers coming back.
- 4 After the sale is finished, the customer does not need any attention.

☐  
☐  
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Surprising Facts about Customer Care

*We might believe that our customer service is excellent, but what do our customers think? After all, it's their opinion that matters, not ours!*

Here are the hard facts we have to deal with:

- One customer in four is dissatisfied with some aspect of customer care.
- Surveys show that for every customer who complains, there are 26 others who never say anything about customer service.
- The average 'wronged' customer will tell 8–16 more people about their negative experience.
- Some 90% of unhappy customers will never buy from you again.
- 80% of lost customers result from the feeling that 'they just don't care about me or my business'.
- With the use of the Internet nowadays, one person can tell hundreds, or even thousands of other people about their experiences! As someone once said: the competition is only a mouse click away!

*Obviously we need to focus on more ways to improve customer care. It's not enough just to give customers exactly what they ask for. We need to 'go beyond the call of duty', in other words, take the extra step to make our customers feel special. This is the only real difference we can make. It's just too easy these days for customers to change to our competitors!*

## OVER TO YOU

- If customer care is so important, why do so many businesses not pay enough attention to it?
- Will there be more of a demand for good customer service in the future? Why, or why not?
- How does your company know if it is giving good or bad service?

## 2

## Face to face with customers

## STARTER

What makes the most impact in face-to-face encounters in customer care? Choose the three most important aspects for you and compare your answer with a partner.

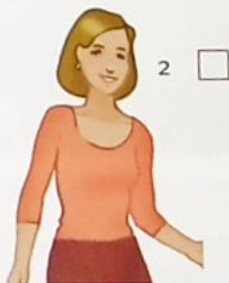
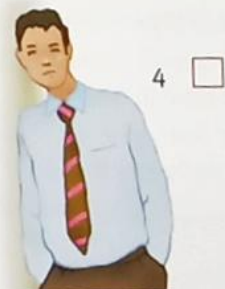
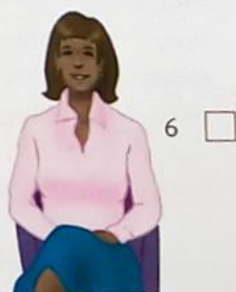
clear speaking voice • good vocabulary • sense of humour • expensive clothes • pleasant body language • good eye contact • accurate grammar • good grooming

### 1 First read this tip from an American customer care website. Do you agree? Why, or why not?

#### What customers really notice

Your body language – the way you stand or sit, what you do with your arms and hands, whether you are smiling or frowning, and so on – tells the real truth to your customers! Your words may be able to hide that you're bored or uninterested, but your body can't. When meeting a customer, make eye contact within 10 seconds. This creates a bond between you and the customer and it shows your interest in real communication. If you don't make eye contact, the customer could think that you aren't interested – or even worse, that you're ignoring them!

Now decide whether the following body language would give a positive **P** or negative **N** impression to your customers.

1 ☐2 ☐4 ☐6 ☐3 ☐5 ☐7 ☐

Do you think this impression is the same for people from all cultures?