

Is it OK to complain?

Teaching the Topic

We're not always happy with things that happen in life – whether it's something a neighbour or colleague does, or goods or services we have received.

The learner needs to be clear that it is OK in New Zealand culture to complain about something if they're not happy, and to understand how to complain.

This is also a good opportunity to introduce the learner to their right to complain if goods and services they receive are not as advertised, or are faulty.

Resources

- Video of a TV programme covering a complaint story (for example, Fair Go, Campbell Live).
- Newspaper articles (printed or online) about someone making a complaint.
- Photos or copies of complaint signs from local stores
- *Your Consumer Rights (Goods)* and *Your Consumer Rights (Services)* booklets from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs website (www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz)
- *Your Rights* leaflet from the Health and Disability Commissioner's website (www.hdc.org.nz).
- Case studies from the resources page of www.complaintline.org.nz.

Suggested activities

- Talk about a time when the learner wanted to complain. Get them to write down the key words relating to the issue.
- Talk about the different ways you might make a complaint – in person, on the phone, by letter or email – and when each might be appropriate.
- Practise how you might make a complaint using the language at the bottom of this page. Practise making and accepting apologies too.

Using the Worksheet

Introductory activity: In what situations (if any) is it OK to complain about something in the learner's culture? How is this different in New Zealand?

This activity uses a series of statements and pictures to explore the learner's ideas of when it is OK to complain, and the language they might use to do so in formal and informal situations.

Main learning points

- It is culturally acceptable in New Zealand for any person to complain to another person, organisation or business if they're not happy with something.
- A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction.
- A complaint can be about behaviour, advice, faulty goods or products, or services.
- The best place to start if you're not happy with something is to talk to the other person involved.
- Complaints help people learn to do things better.
- Do not be afraid to complain.

Language

- Complaints – *This was not what I expected. I don't feel happy about... I felt uncomfortable when you... I would like to complain about... This is not what I wanted...*
- Apologies – *Sorry for the mix up. My apologies, I didn't realise that... I'm so sorry that...*
- Accepting an apology – *That's OK. No worries. Forget about it. Don't worry about it. That's fine. No problem. It's all good.*
- Phrases to use with uninvited visitors/callers – *No, I'm not interested, thank you. I'm sorry, I'm busy at the moment. Sorry, I'm happy with the service we use already. No thanks, I don't want to buy any.*

Is it OK to complain?

Excuse me, but....


1. Read each statement below. Do you agree or disagree?

	I agree	I disagree
A woman is not happy with a service she gets from a business. It's OK for her to complain to the business providing the service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A shop has a 'No refunds' sign on their counter. This means they don't have to replace an item you bought there, even if it's faulty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A salesperson comes to your door. It's OK not to invite them in to your house.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You want to complain about a service. You must put your complaint in writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's disrespectful to complain to someone older than you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

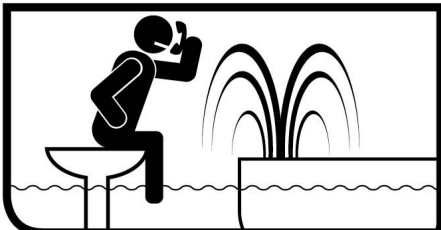
Discuss the statements above with your tutor. The sentence starters below might help you.

- Do you think...?
- What about...?
- I think....
- I disagree because....

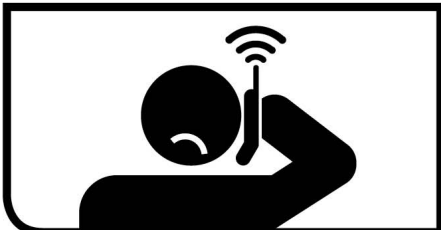
2. Look at each picture below. How could you finish what the person complaining might say?



Excuse me, I'm trying to get my baby to sleep. Do you think...



Hello, is that the landlord? I have an urgent problem! My.....



Hello, customer service? According to your website, you provide delivery within five working days, but...