



13 Breakdown

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about breakdowns and faults
- Discussing problems and offering advice
- Checking someone understands
- Using the language of advice and recommendation to offer help

Case study

- Managing a breakdown in service

Starting point

- 1 What kinds of breakdown can you think of?
- 2 Is it acceptable to produce goods and provide services that are not 100% perfect?
- 3 Which of these products would you be prepared to buy at a discounted price if they had a defect? Why / why not?
 - furniture
 - jewellery
 - food products
 - clothing
 - toys
 - electronic equipment
 - books
 - cars

Working with words | Breakdowns and faults

- 1 Read these extracts 1–3 from defect policy statements and match them to the products in pictures a–c.

1

In the case of product **failure**, please contact the number below to obtain a returns code. Please return the **defective** unit to us in its original packaging together with a description of the fault and a note of the returns code.



2

If you are not completely satisfied with the quality of our products or if the packaging is **damaged**, please retain the product and the packaging and return to the address above within 48 hours of receipt. Please include a note about the nature of the problem and state whether you would prefer a refund or replacement.



3

Products may be returned for product dissatisfaction, size changes and manufacturer **defect**. If a product is damaged we will pay for shipping.



- 2 Match the words in **bold** from the texts in 1 to definitions 1–4.

- 1 with a mistake or fault in it: _____
- 2 harmed or spoiled: _____
- 3 a mistake or fault: _____
- 4 case of something not working / functioning as expected: _____

3 Match 1–8 to a–h.

- 1 The campaign has **gone wrong** ... ____
- 2 We can't do any work on our computers at the moment ... ____
- 3 We didn't get the products in time for Christmas ... ____
- 4 It has definitely **broken down** ... ____
- 5 I need to exchange my new keyboard ... ____
- 6 I can't open this file ... ____
- 7 There must have been a **misunderstanding** ... ____
- 8 We'll have to use the stairs ... ____

- a because it's **faulty** – the space bar doesn't work.
- b because the lift is **out of order**.
- c because the product has a major **flaw** and it won't be ready in time for the launch.
- d because I asked for 40 but I got 14!
- e because our supplier **let us down**. They are very **unreliable**.
- f because the format of it is **incompatible** with the software I use.
- g because the server is **down**. There must be a **bug** that needs to be fixed.
- h because it won't do anything and this red light is on.

4 Which words in **bold** from the texts in 1 and from 3 would you normally use to talk about these things? Some words may go in more than one category.

- 1 people 2 objects 3 companies

» For more exercises, go to Practice file 13 on page 126.

5 Work with a partner. Describe and analyse the possible problems in these pictures. Use as many words from 2 and 3 as possible.



6 Work in small groups. Discuss the problems you might have with the following.

- two teams from different countries working together
- a very old office building
- a traditional office hierarchy
- buying electrical or electronic products abroad
- buying a second-hand computer
- buying things online

Example: *If you buy a product abroad and it is faulty, it is very difficult to get it fixed or replaced.*

Exchanging information | Discussing problems

- 1 What kind of problems do you have with office equipment or computers? How good are you at fixing them yourself?
- 2 55▷ Listen to two conversations and complete this table.

Problem	Diagnosis	Solution / cure
1		
2		

- 3 55▷ Listen again and complete the phrases in *italics*.

- 1 Hi, Magda. *What's the _____?*
- 2 My boss _____ on giving me extra work.
- 3 *What do you _____ by 'extra work'?*
- 4 Well, *it looks _____* you have a communication problem to me.
- 5 *Have you _____* talking to her?
- 6 Well, I'd ask to speak to her *if I _____* you.
- 7 *I _____* you should ask for an extension on the deadline.
- 8 *That should _____* it out temporarily.
- 9 Good afternoon. _____ *can I help?*
- 10 OK. *What's wrong with it _____?*
- 11 Well, *it's _____* crashing.
- 12 *When you _____* 'it's always crashing', *do you _____ ...?*
- 13 Well, *it _____* as though it could be a battery problem.
- 14 *The _____* thing would be to buy a new battery.
- 15 *That _____* fix it.

- 4 Which phrases in *italics* in 3 express the following ideas?

- a Do you have a problem? _____
- b He / She / It ... all the time. _____
- c Give me more details. _____
- d I think the problem is ... _____
- e My advice is ... _____
- f That should solve the problem. _____

- 5 Put this conversation in the right order 1–10. Then work with a partner. Read the conversation.

- ___ a B Someone in your accounts department.
- ___ b A It sounds like a problem with our telephone system. Who were you trying to speak to?
- ___ c A The best thing would be for me to give Accounts your details and get them to call you. That should sort it out.
- ___ d A Have you tried dialing their direct line?
- ___ e B Yes and it's always when I've just managed to get through to the right person.
- ___ f A When you say 'cut off', do you mean that the line just goes dead?
- 1 g A Good afternoon. How can I help?
- ___ h B I'm trying to speak to someone at your company but I keep getting cut off.
- ___ i B OK. Thanks. My number is 01654 543321.
- ___ j B Yes, I have. But the same thing always happens.

Tip | always

We use *always* + present simple to talk about a habit or regular activity.

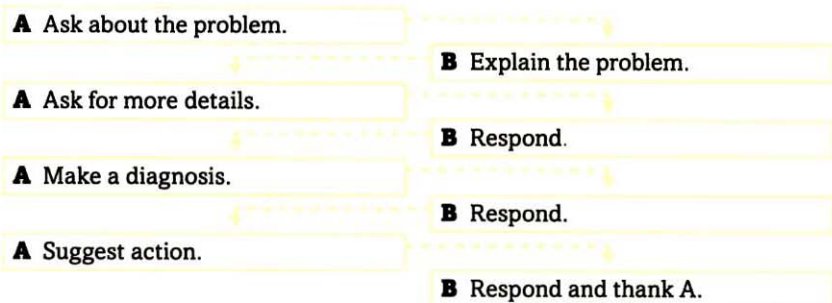
She always takes the bus to work.

We use *always* + present continuous to talk about an annoying habit.

She's always taking my stapler.

» For more exercises, go to Practice file 13 on page 126.

6 Work with a partner. Have conversations about the two problems below using this flow chart.



- 1 Your team members often have meetings without you, so you don't know what is happening with the project.
- 2 You have received fifteen complaints in the last week about one of your products not working. It is a piece of software that doesn't work on some systems.

7 Work in groups and try to speak for at least a minute on these subjects. Then listen to the others in your group. When they have finished, ask for more details and offer a solution.

- a problem with a piece of office equipment
- a communication breakdown at work
- an unreliable or untrustworthy colleague

 » Interactive Workbook » Email

Key expressions

Asking what the problem is

What's the matter?
How can I help?
So what appears to be the problem?

Explaining the problem

It keeps on (+ *-ing*).
It's always (+ *-ing*).
It won't (+ verb).
It means that ...

Asking for details

What's wrong with it exactly?
What do you mean by ...?
What sort of noise / smell is it?
When you say ..., do you mean ...?

Diagnosing the problem


It looks / sounds like ...
It looks / sounds as though ...
It could be ...
It might be ...

Advising

The best thing would be to ...
I'd advise you to ...
If I were you, I'd ...
Have you tried (+ noun / *-ing*)?
I think you should ...

Confirming a solution

That should fix it.
That should sort it out.
That should solve the problem.

 » Interactive Workbook
» Phrasebank

Practically speaking | How to check someone understands

1 56▶ Listen to four conversations. Match 1–4 to a–d.

- 1 Do you know ... ____
- 2 Does that ... ____
- 3 Is that ... ____
- 4 Do you ... ____

- a make sense?
- b clear?
- c see?
- d what I mean?

2 56▶ Listen again. Does the listener understand what the first person is saying?

3 Which of these responses show the person understands? Which ones show they don't understand?

- 1 Absolutely.
- 2 Kind of, but ...
- 3 I don't get ...
- 4 I see what you mean ...

4 Work with a partner. Take turns to explain the following to your partner and check that he / she understands

- why it is important to get on with your colleagues
- what you want to change about your working conditions and why
- how to make a domestic appliance work
- how to book time off from work.

Language at work | Advice and recommendation | *too* and *enough*

1 Put a–g below into categories 1–4.

- 1 Asking for advice: _____
 - 2 Giving advice: _____
 - 3 Introducing an option: _____
 - 4 Giving an instruction: _____
- a I think you **should** ask for an extension.
 - b You **have to** get it approved by management.
 - c I'd ask to speak to her if I were you.
 - d Well, you **could** just use the electrical lead.
 - e What **should** I do?
 - f What **would** you do in this situation?
 - g I **would** buy a new battery.

2 Read 1–3. Underline the adjectives and circle the nouns.

- 1 Is the job too difficult?
- 2 I don't have enough time.
- 3 It's easy enough to do.

3 Do we use *enough* with nouns or with adjectives?

4 When do we use *too*?

5 Choose the correct answer from the words in **bold italics**.

- 1 We use *too* before **nouns** / **adjectives** to emphasize them.
- 2 We use *enough* **before** / **after** nouns and **before** / **after** adjectives.

» For more information and exercises, go to Practice file 13 on page 127.

6 Work with a partner. Take turns to give and receive advice and instructions. Student A, turn to File 33 on page 143. Student B, turn to File 37 on page 144.

7 Work with a partner. Look at these pictures and identify the problems. Take turns to be the people in one of the pictures. Ask your partner for advice. Have conversations using phrases for advice and recommendation and *too* and *enough*.



Tip | *should*

Should can be used for advice and prediction.

Advice: I think you **should** put some more in. (*should* = I think it's a good idea.)

Prediction: That **should** solve the problem. (*should* = This usually works; it has in the past.)

Managing a breakdown in service

Background

A community-minded company

One World Bazaar sells handmade products from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with an emphasis on quality and good design. It sells the products online via their website and also supplies over 300 independent shops in Europe.

What makes One World Bazaar different from most companies is that it was set up to benefit the producers of the products it sells, rather than the customers. The producers are craftsmakers in some of the poorest parts of the world and their work helps to build up communities, relieve poverty and improve social and environmental conditions.

All the products come from cooperatives

set up by the producers in their local communities. The producers are paid a realistic amount of money for the job, which takes account of the local cost of living and the amount of skill involved. One World Bazaar always pays them on time and adds an extra payment, called a 'community surcharge', to prices when market conditions allow. The cooperatives use the extra money to benefit the whole community. The company also provides working capital to producers who need money for materials or equipment, and any remaining profits from sales are also reinvested in projects to benefit the local community.

The Expert View

Producers do not maintain relationships with customers only for the customers' benefit. However, a close working relationship between producers and customers has many benefits for both parties. The value of such a working relationship can be considered as a trade-off between these benefits, and the sacrifices that both parties expect to make. For a good long-term relationship to develop, the benefits need to be greater than the sacrifices. The mutual benefit and value of the relationship may be put in danger if either party fails to fulfil the requirements of the other – for example, by failing to provide the expected level of service support.

Dr Bob Lillis, Lecturer in Service Operations Management
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Discussion

- 1 Who benefits from the way a company like One World Bazaar operates? Do you think this is good? Why / why not?
- 2 Think about the way One World Bazaar sells their products and who they supply them to. What problems might a company like this have as a result of the way it operates?

Task

The company is currently experiencing some problems. Hits to the website are up by 30% but the number of orders is down by 20%. The company profits have fallen by 10%. There is an increasing number of complaints which fall into these three categories

- problems using the website for online ordering
- poor quality / condition of goods received
- problems with supply and delivery times.

- 1 Work in groups of three. You are holding a meeting to discuss the problems at One World Bazaar. Read some of the customer complaints about
 - online ordering – Student A, turn to File 34 on page 143
 - products – Student B, turn to File 38 on page 144
 - supply and delivery – Student C, turn to File 26 on page 141.
- 2 Summarize the complaints for your colleagues.
- 3 Listen to your colleagues' summaries and ask for more details if necessary.
- 4 Discuss the complaints and suggest possible solutions.
- 5 Decide what the company needs to do in order to improve its service to its customers.

Case study

File 24 | Unit 9

Case study, Discussion, Exercise 5, page 59

Maersk Logistics' solution for Castorama Polska

- Created an 'integrated logistics environment' which
 - handles the supply and distribution process as a whole, rather than separate stages
 - operates an information system based on purchase orders (a computer system that has information on all customer orders and purchases and automatically orders any products that Castorama are / will be running low on)
 - takes care of the negotiations with suppliers and all the documentation.
- Improved the online tracking system for products and information as follows.
 - Castorama staff can log on to the system and find out where a customer's order is at any time.
 - Staff can keep track of every order – when it was dispatched, how long before delivery, any changes in schedule, etc.
- Reduced lead times and transportation costs by
 - handling all the sourcing from European and Polish suppliers, including transportation
 - controlling transportation costs
 - channelling orders through one distribution centre in Central Poland – orders are repacked on to trucks and distributed to different stores throughout Poland
 - keeping the supply of key products up to date at central warehouse.

Results

- information is better
- efficiency has improved
- client satisfaction has increased
- sales are increasing
- confidence in Castorama's capabilities has improved – among customers and suppliers

File 25 | Unit 16

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 101

Student B

Mission: Research sales and marketing history. Find company data and analyse it.

Result: Surprising because

- sales decreased after company started exporting to mainland Europe – these consumers prefer coffee and herbal teas
- weak marketing campaign two years ago – expensive with bad results – concentrated so much on continental Europe that the key UK market was forgotten and sales dropped.

Conclusion: Continental Europe is potentially big market. Need to launch new campaign there, but not forget importance of UK market.

File 26 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 83

Student C

You work in logistics. Read these complaints you have received from customers.

Two months ago I placed an order for some wooden toys for my grandchildren. When I contacted you three weeks ago to say they hadn't arrived, you kindly sent me the order. Now not only do I have the order you re-sent, but this morning the original order finally arrived! What should I do with the extra order?

The Bohemian glassware you sent me is lovely. But one of the glasses is broken. They were inadequately wrapped. There just isn't enough packing for a long-distance order.

I am very upset because an item I ordered took over three weeks to reach me. I don't know if it is the postal service in my country, or the service in yours which is unreliable, but if you can't keep the two weeks promise then you shouldn't make it. I don't have much confidence in national postal services – have you considered UPS or DHL?

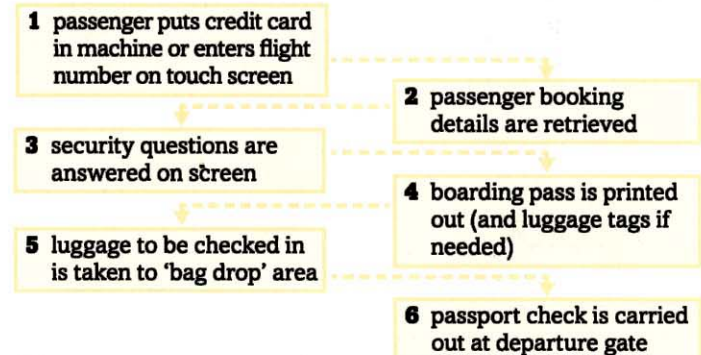
File 27 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 89

Student A

Read the information about the check-in procedure and present it to your group.

Self check-in machines at the airport



Advantages

- will reduce costs because fewer check-in employees will be needed
- will reduce waiting times, leading to improved customer satisfaction
- passengers with only hand luggage can check in more quickly (e.g. business customers)

File 32 | Unit 9

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 59

Student A

You interviewed some people who used to be regular Toyztime customers. Your partner has interviewed Toyztime employees at one of the main stores. You asked the customers this question: 'Why have you stopped shopping at Toyztime?'

- 1 Read the comments carefully.
- 2 Take turns to report what you heard to your partner. Listen to what your partner says and find a corresponding comment from a customer.

Example: *A One customer told me that they went to a Toyztime store to buy ...*

B Right. It sounds like they do have problem there. An employee I spoke to said that their deliveries are often late because ...

Toyztime customers' comments

- a 'I wanted to buy a particular toy at Toyztime for my grandson's birthday but they were out of stock. They told me they were expecting a delivery that Friday morning and said they'd keep one aside for me to pick up in the afternoon. When I went in at 3.00 p.m. on the Friday I was told that the delivery hadn't arrived yet. What a waste of my time! I won't be shopping there again.'
- b 'I was told by a sales assistant that a product I ordered would take about ten working days to arrive at the store for collection. I called after ten days to check if it had arrived. It hadn't and the person I spoke to couldn't even tell me when I might expect it to arrive! I couldn't wait any longer so got it from a different company.'
- c 'When I asked why the product I was interested in was cheaper at a competitor's store, the manager just told me they had had to put their prices up. As long as I know I am getting the products cheaper elsewhere, I won't be going back to Toyztime.'
- d 'I called to check if my local store had a certain toy I wanted in stock. The man I spoke to looked it up on the system and told me there were three in stock. When I got to the store though, there were none. It was the second time something like that has happened, so I've decided to buy toys elsewhere.'
- e 'Several times I've been into Toyztime to buy a toy and been told it's out of stock as it's such a popular item. Often it takes up to two weeks for them to get it in again. At some other shops they can get the item in for you the next day – I prefer to use shops that can do that for their customers.'
- f 'On two occasions now, I've seen new toys advertised on TV and expected Toyztime to sell them. When I went in to my local store, however, I was told that as the product was fairly new, it hadn't been ordered yet. Luckily I found what I wanted at another chain of toy shops the same day!'

File 33 | Unit 13

Language at work, Exercise 6, page 82

Student A

Situation 1

You are working in a new team. The problem is that most of your team work on the other side of the building. You need to talk to them face-to-face regularly, and you are wasting time by going to see them all the time.

- 1 Explain your problem to your partner.
- 2 Ask for advice.

Situation 2

Listen to your partner's problem. Here are some possible solutions to give.

- Get the company to buy desk fans.
- Change your working hours so you aren't working at the hottest time of the day.
- Work from home.
- Refuse to work until it's fixed.

File 34 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 83

Student A

You are in charge of the website. Read these complaints you have received from customers.

Urgent

I ordered some goods from you two weeks ago. I have had a communication from my bank saying that there has been an attack on my account. Fortunately they have been able to protect my account, but can you assure me that your payment system is 100% trustworthy?

I want to buy something from your site, but I keep getting a message saying that there is an incompatible algorithm. What does that mean? Is there another way of paying?

Dear One World Bazaar,

It is very slow to download your site. Where we are we don't have broadband. I really want to order stuff from you but this is too frustrating.

PS Do you really need all the animations on your website? I don't see what they bring to it. It takes a lot of time to import the plug-ins.

File 35 | Unit 10

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 65

Student C

Read this costing for the attractions and facilities for last year's event. Last year you went over budget on the event so make sure you don't this year. You have a total budget of €15,000. Decide what you think you can afford and make recommendations for this year's events to the rest of the committee.

- Promotional video about the work of the charity: no cost
- Tour de France simulator: €550
- Catering for outdoor barbecue: €3,000
- Guided tour of the factory: €195
- Quiz about the company: no cost
- Building a special course for bike trials: €1,200
- Charity contribution on sales of bicycles and / or clothing: €5,400
- Lottery tickets for the charity (bicycles as prizes): €500
- Public event insurance: €1,000
- Portable toilets: €450
- Children's play area: €550
- Overtime payments for staff: €2,000

File 36 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 89

Student B

Read the information about the check-in procedure and present it to your group.

Online check-in

- 1 passenger goes to airline website and enters name and flight booking number
- 2 flight details are confirmed
- 3 passenger prints out their own boarding card
- 4 passenger arrives at airport
- 5 luggage to be checked in is taken to 'bag drop' area
- 6 boarding pass is scanned electronically at departure gate

Advantages

- will reduce costs because fewer check-in employees will be needed
- passengers will check in before arriving at the airport so there will be no waiting in queues – increased customer satisfaction
- business customers can check in at home or at work and will be more relaxed at the airport

File 37 | Unit 13

Language at work, Exercise 6, page 82

Student B

Situation 1

Listen to your partner's problem. Here are some possible solutions to give.

- Ask to move desks to be nearer your team.
- Arrange just one daily meeting at a halfway point in the building.
- Alternate days when you go to them and they come to you.

Situation 2

The air conditioning has broken in your building. It is summer and very difficult to work in these high temperatures.

- 1 Explain your problem to your partner.
- 2 Ask for advice.

File 38 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 83

Student B

You work in sourcing and marketing the products. Read these complaints you have received from customers.

Hi,
I have just received the hat I ordered. Unfortunately it's too big. It goes over my ears and I can't see anything! I think there's a problem with the way you describe your sizes. Normally I take size 56, but this is huge. Can I send it back for a smaller size?
Carlo

Hi
I ordered an amber ring from you to give to my mother for her birthday. It arrived yesterday and I have noticed that there is a dead insect inside the amber. Personally I find this quite interesting, but I'm afraid that my mother will not appreciate it. Could I send the ring back and get a replacement in time for her birthday? It's in two weeks.
Darren

I ordered one of your beautiful Swazi dresses, but when I tried it on it was much too tight. I am normally a large – but with these sizes I imagine I would need extra large!! Can you be clearer about the sizes?
PS I gave the dress to my niece – she looks lovely in it.