The best customer service is if the customer doesn't need to call you, doesn't need to talk to you. It just works.
Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com

6B At your service

1 GRAMMAR *can, could,* and *be able to*



a Circle the correct form. Tick (✓) if both are possible.

1 My boyfriend *can* / *is able to* cook really well, because his dad's a chef. ✓
2 You need to *can* / *be able to* forget your personal problems when you're at work.
3 My mother *could* / *was able to* sew really well when she was younger.
4 If it's nice this evening, *we can* / *we'll be able to* have a barbecue.

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5 Sorry, but we *haven't could | haven't been able to* give you the table you wanted.
6 If your brother's restaurant was nearer, we *could | would be able to* go more often.
7 To work for this company, you must *can | be able to* speak three languages.
8 We're really sorry we *couldn't | weren't able to* come to your party.
9 I've never *could | been able to* make paella, but I'd love to learn.
10 *Can you | Will you be able to* make the lunch tomorrow?
11 They wouldn't give me a refund for the top, but I *could | was able to* change it for a new one.
12 I hate *not can | not being able to* read a menu when I'm abroad.

b Rewrite the highlighted sentences using the correct form of *can* or *be able to*. If both forms are possible, write two sentences.

1 Is it OK if I close the window? I'm really cold.
Can I close the window?
2 It isn't possible for me to come to the next class. I'll be on holiday.
I can't come to the next class.
I won't be able to come to the next class.
3 Is it OK if I sit here? It's the only free seat.
4 It hasn't been possible for me to write to you. I've been very busy.

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5 It wasn't possible for her to finish the meal. There was too much food.

6 They're staying in a self-catering apartment. They want to have the possibility of cooking their own meals.

7 I'm sure that isn't John. He's on holiday.

8 We are delighted that it is possible for us to come to your party. We are looking forward to it.

9 I love having the possibility of getting up late in the holidays. I usually start work at 8 o'clock.

10 We managed to book a room with a sea view. It was the last one available.

2 READING

a Read the article once and choose the best title.

1 Low-cost airlines improve their service ☐
2 How to complain about service on flights? ☐
3 Service with a smile – if you're lucky! ☐

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While airlines have a reputation for providing bad customer service on board, their cabin staff are usually extremely helpful. They greet you as you board, they serve you drinks and snacks at your seat, and they are always waiting to say goodbye when you disembark. Most people value the professional but friendly attitude of attendants, but it appears that there is one airline that does not.

In May this year, the Japanese budget airline Skymark introduced a new eight-point 'Service Concept' on board its aircraft. The guidelines stated among other things that cabin staff would not help passengers stow their luggage into overhead lockers. On top of this, attendants were not required to use 'polite language' when talking to customers. Passengers were also warned that the airline would not accept any complaints on board. Anybody found to be holding up a flight would be asked to leave, so that the plane could take off on time. Dissatisfied passengers were advised to direct their grievances to the National Consumer Affairs Center or other related agencies.

Fortunately for Skymark's passengers, it seems the airline is not getting away with their new policy. The head of Japan's Consumer Affairs Agency has made a statement saying that it is improper to tell customers to direct their complaints to a public organization. Moreover, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has reported Skymark to the airline authorities. Under this pressure, the airline has agreed to revise at least the part of its guidelines regarding customer complaints.

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So why would an airline want to jeopardize the reputation of its staff like this? According to Skymark, the main explanation is that the crew's primary task is not to attend to passengers but to act as safety personnel. This concern with safety is understandable when you look at the airline's recent history. Between the start of the year and early May, Skymark is reported to have broken safety rules at least six times. In one incident, a flight to Okinawa approached the island below the legal minimum altitude, and in another, an aircraft landed at Ibaraki Airport without permission.

With a fleet of 29 aircraft, Skymark currently only operates in Japan. However, the airline has a number of Airbus A380s on order. The company has recently applied for rights to fly the new planes to New York JFK and London Heathrow airports. With its current safety record and its controversial customer service policy, who knows whether they will be given permission?

b Read the article again and mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false).

1 Passengers hardly ever complain about flight attendants. *T*
2 Skymark wants passengers to put their luggage away in the lockers themselves. ___
3 Passengers on Skymark flights should expect flight attendants to be polite. ___
4 Cabin staff on Skymark flights have been told not to listen to customer complaints. ___

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5 Skymark has been criticized about its new policy. ___
6 Skymark is not going to make any changes to the new rules. ___
7 Skymark says the airline values customer satisfaction more than safety. ___
8 Skymark has a good safety record. ___
9 The plane to Okinawa was flying too low. ___
10 Skymark is hoping to expand in the future. ___

c Match the highlighted words in the text to the definitions below.

1 say hello to somebody _____
2 things that you want to complain about _____
3 official rules on how to do something _____
4 causing public discussion and disagreement _____
5 a group of aircraft that is owned by one person or company _____
6 causing a delay _____
7 not being punished for doing something bad _____
8 went towards a place _____
9 put something away in a particular place until it is needed _____
10 risk harming or destroying something _____

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3 VOCABULARY at a restaurant

a Complete the sentences.

1 Would you like a g*lass* of juice?
2 He always has a b_____ of cereal for breakfast.
3 I'm looking for a c_____ to open the wine.
4 Let's ask for a j_____ of tap water instead of mineral water.
5 I'll lay the table for you. Which t_____ shall I use – the white one or the blue one?
6 Do you ever make tea in a t_____ or do you always use mugs?
7 Can I have another w_____ gl_____, please? I'm changing from white to red.
8 This kn_____ doesn't cut very well. Could you bring me another one?
9 Could you put sp_____ on the table? We're having soup as a starter.
10 I don't like drinking tea out of a mug. I prefer using a cup and s_____.

b Complete the text with the correct form of the verbs in the list (past simple, past participle, infinitive, or verb + *-ing*).

ask for not book carry clear not lay leave order
pour recommend send back serve take try

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We had a disastrous meal in Menorca once. Some friends had [1] *recommended* the local lobster stew to us and so we went to one of the best restaurants on the island to try it. Unfortunately, we had [2] _____ a table, so we couldn't have dinner there. Instead, we sat down at a table that a family had just left in the restaurant next door. The owner [3] _____ the table for us, and then the waiter who was [4] _____ our table came to [5] _____ our order. He seemed quite young and a bit inexperienced. When he came back, he was [6] _____ a tray of drinks, but he couldn't put them down because he [7] _____ the table. After he had put the tablecloth down, he [8] _____ some wine for us. We [9] _____ it, but we didn't like it, so we [10] _____ it _____ and waited for our meal. At last, the waiter appeared with the food we had [11] _____. Luckily, my son was in the toilets at the time, because the waiter dropped the stew all over his chair as he was putting it on the table. We [12] _____ the bill and left the restaurant without [13] _____ a tip.

5 LISTENING

a iChecker You are going to hear a radio programme giving advice about how to complain in a restaurant. Number the advice in the order you hear it.

- ☐ What to do in case you are ill
- ☐ How to make it even clearer that you aren't satisfied
- ☐ Who to contact about the complaint the next day
- ☐ *1* When to make the complaint
- ☐ How to make the complaint
- ☐ Who to speak to in the restaurant if the complaint is ignored

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b Listen again and complete the sentences.

1 The key to making a successful complaint is to _____ _____.
2 You should be _____ and _____ when you speak to the waiter.
3 You shouldn't _____ _____ _____, because it might not be his or her fault.
4 If the waiter isn't helpful, you should speak _____ _____ _____.
5 Always leave a tip, or the waiter might think you _____ _____.
6 In _____ _____, contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau to take the matter further.
7 Contact the restaurant or the health department if you get _____ _____.

LIVEWORKSHEETS