

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! ☐

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. —
- 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 _____



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.

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.