Here to help: customer service

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 service recovery ____	**a** the process of correcting a service failure to restore customer satisfaction
2 goodwill gesture ____	**b** a free offer or discount given to make amends, without obligation
3 turnaround time ____	**c** the time taken to complete or resolve a request
4 first-call resolution ____	**d** solving a customer's issue during their first contact, without follow-up needed
5 customer churn ____	**e** the rate at which customers stop using a company's services
6 escalation protocol ____	**f** a defined procedure for passing a complaint to a higher authority
7 empathetic ____	**g** able to understand and share another person's feelings
8 proactive ____	**h** acting in advance to prevent a problem rather than reacting afterwards
9 accountability ____	**i** taking responsibility for one's actions or outcomes
10 grievance ____	**j** a formal complaint about unfair treatment

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For correcting a service failure: service recovery / service refusal.

2 For a free gesture to make amends: goodwill gesture / mandatory refund.

3 For solving an issue on first contact: first-call resolution / repeated follow-up.

4 For the rate customers leave a company: customer churn / customer loyalty.

5 For genuinely understanding a customer's feelings: empathetic / indifferent.

6 For acting ahead of a problem: proactive / reactive.

7 For taking responsibility for outcomes: accountability / denial.

8 For a formal complaint about unfair treatment: grievance / compliment.

3 Complete the service collocations with one word.

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1 _____ recovery (= correcting a service failure)
2 a _____ gesture (= free offer to make amends)
3 first-call _____ (= resolving on first contact)
4 customer _____ (= rate of customers leaving)
5 an _____ protocol (= a defined complaints procedure)
6 _____ listening (= genuinely understanding feelings)
7 a formal _____ (= a complaint about unfair treatment)
8 take _____ (= accept responsibility)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

accountability | customer churn | empathetic | escalation protocol | first-call resolution | goodwill gesture | grievance | proactive | service recovery | turnaround time

Case A: The company improved its 1 _____ rate significantly, solving most issues without requiring a follow-up call.
Case B: A customer filed a formal 2 _____ after repeated delays, and the team followed the standard 3 _____ to involve a senior manager.
Case C: The support agent responded in a genuinely 4 _____ manner, and the company offered a small 5 _____ to apologise for the inconvenience.
Case D: Analysts linked rising 6 _____ directly to slow 7 _____ on customer requests.
Case E: The manager took full 8 _____ for the error rather than blaming staff.
Case F: A well-handled 9 _____ situation can strengthen loyalty more than a problem-free experience, particularly when staff are 10 _____ rather than waiting to be asked.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The economics of customer complaints

Businesses increasingly recognise that complaints, properly handled, represent a valuable source of feedback rather than simply a cost to be minimised. Research suggests that customers who experience effective service recovery often become more loyal than those who never encountered some companies to actively encourage feedback rather than discouraging complaints, recognising that silent dissatisfaction, which never reaches customer service at all, poses a far greater long-term risk to customer churn than a visible, resolvable grievance. Accountability at every level, researchers argue, matters more to customer trust than superficial politeness alone.

1 What do businesses increasingly recognise about complaints? _____
2 What does research suggest about customers who experience effective service recovery? _____
3 What condition must the resolution meet for this effect to occur? _____
4 What has this prompted some companies to do? _____
5 What poses a far greater long-term risk than a visible, resolvable grievance? _____
6 What matters more to customer trust than superficial politeness, according to researchers? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

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1 The issue was solved during the first phone call. FIRST-CALL RESOLUTION _____

2 They offered a free discount to apologise. GOODWILL GESTURE _____

3 The manager accepted full responsibility. ACCOUNTABILITY _____

4 The company acted before the problem got worse. PROACTIVE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing how a company could turn a customer complaint into an opportunity to build loyalty, distinguishing observation from recommendation.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 service recovery 2 goodwill gesture 3 first-call resolution 4 customer churn 5 empathetic 6 proactive 7 accountability 8 grievance

3 Collocations

1 service 2 goodwill 3 resolution 4 churn 5 escalation 6 empathetic 7 grievance 8 accountability

4 Case notes

1 first-call resolution 2 grievance 3 escalation protocol 4 empathetic 5 goodwill gesture
6 customer churn 7 turnaround time 8 accountability 9 service recovery 10 proactive

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 That they represent a valuable source of feedback rather than simply a cost to be minimised.
2 That they often become more loyal than those who never encountered a problem.
3 The resolution must feel genuine rather than merely procedural.
4 Actively encourage feedback rather than discouraging complaints.
5 Silent dissatisfaction that never reaches customer service.
6 Accountability at every level.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 It was solved through first-call resolution. 2 They offered a goodwill gesture.
3 The manager showed real accountability. 4 The company was proactive.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.