

# Complaints and disruptive passengers

## Responding to passenger complaints

### SPEAKING

- 1** Some passengers will complain about everything! Work with a partner. Look at the list of things people sometimes complain about. Which do you think are the most common? Can you think of any more things to add?

- flight delays and waiting time
- the service
- the food
- the cabin temperature
- the seating arrangements
- the drinks
- the lack of information
- the state of the toilets
- ... even the cabin crew!

- 2** With your partner, discuss what people say when they complain about the things in exercise 1.

### LISTENING

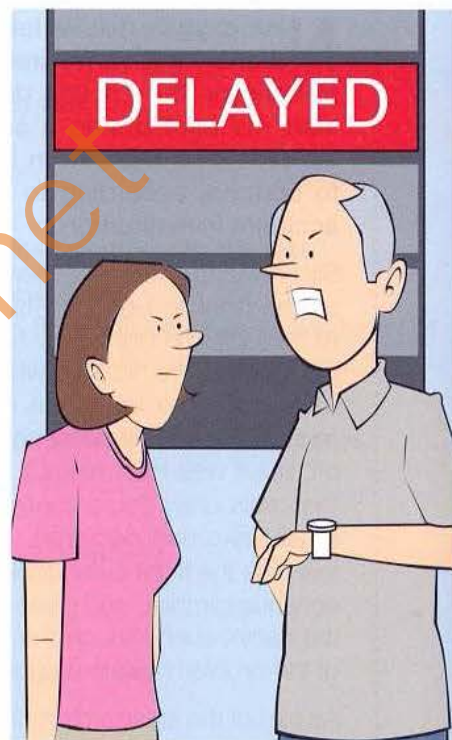
- 3** As the flight attendant, you must respond positively to complaints. First, look at three complaints during the meals service. What would you say in reply to these passengers?

- 1 Excuse me, we've been waiting for drinks for a long time. We finished eating 20 minutes ago.
- 2 I'm sorry, I can't eat this meal – it's cold!
- 3 This is not what I asked for. I ordered a vegetarian meal!



- 4** Now listen to the flight attendants' replies and complete the sentences.

- 1 Oh, I do understand. I \_\_\_\_\_. It's been so \_\_\_\_\_. What can I \_\_\_\_\_ you?
- 2 Oh dear, that's not \_\_\_\_\_. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ sorry. Let me take it \_\_\_\_\_ for you and see if I can get you a hot cooked meal immediately.
- 3 Oh, \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sorry about this. Please, be \_\_\_\_\_. Let me just check the \_\_\_\_\_ meals list.



## SPEAKING

5 The flight attendant must be a *diplomat*. It is important to sympathize, apologize, give a good reason where possible, and then find a solution. Look at the first reply again and see how it follows this pattern:

- 1 Sympathize: *I do understand.*  
 Apologize: *I apologize.*  
 Give a reason: *It's been so busy.*  
 Find a solution: *What can I get you?*

Analyse the other two replies in the same way.

- 2 Sympathize: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Apologize: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Find a solution: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Sympathize: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Apologize: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Find a solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Is it always a good idea to give a reason or excuse for a problem? Are there times when it is better not to give excuses?

## LANGUAGE FOCUS

OFFERING TO  
HELP (2)

Study these sentences.

- Let me just check the special meals list.  
 Let me get an official form for you.  
 Let me see if I can get you another one.  
 Let me get you a blanket.

## PRONUNCIATION



6 Listen and repeat the sentences in *Language focus*.

## LISTENING



7 Listen to five complaints and identify each problem. Decide what you would say in response.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_



8 Now listen to the responses of the flight attendants to the five complaints. How well do you think they dealt with the complaints?

9 Fill in the missing words in some of the key expressions used by the flight attendants when dealing with the problems in exercise 8. Listen again if you need to.

- 1 Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_ me know, and I do \_\_\_\_\_.  
 2 I do apologize, sir. I know how \_\_\_\_\_ it is.  
 3 I'm sorry \_\_\_\_\_ that.  
 4 I'm \_\_\_\_\_ that you haven't \_\_\_\_\_ your flight.  
 5 We've had \_\_\_\_\_ many problems today and I can \_\_\_\_\_ apologize.



## Dealing with complaints about other passengers

### SPEAKING

- 1 What sort of complaints can passengers make about other passengers? In your experience, which are the most common?



What do you do when passengers complain about other passengers?

### LISTENING



- 2 Listen to a passenger complaining to a flight attendant, Josef, and answer the questions.

- 1 Why is the passenger angry?
- 2 What does the passenger want to do?
- 3 What does the flight attendant, Josef, suggest?
- 4 Is the passenger satisfied?

What do you think happens next?

- 3 Listen again to the conversation and fill in the missing words.

**Passenger 1** Excuse me, listen, I can't sit here any longer. That group of people is making too much noise. They are <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ me and everyone around. If you can't do anything about it, you'll have to find me another seat. I <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to sit here any longer.

**Josef** Hmm, yes, I <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. I can hear how noisy they are and I'm sorry they are disturbing you. Have you spoken to them yourself?

**Passenger 1** Of course not. I don't think they <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ about me or anyone else.

**Josef** Let me have a <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ with them. If it doesn't get better, then I'll try to find you another seat, although the plane is pretty full. <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ about that?

**Passenger 1** Well, er ... yes, OK. Thank you. That would be fine.



- 4 Listen to Josef describing the problem to his colleague, Hans. Answer the questions.

- 1 Will it be possible to move the angry passenger?
- 2 What will Josef have to do to deal with the situation?
- 3 What will Hans do to help?



- 5** Josef is talking to the group of noisy passengers. Try to fill in the missing words, then listen and check your answers.

**Josef** Excuse me, excuse me. Listen guys, are you <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ the flight?

**Passenger 2** Yes, yes, sure.

**Passenger 3** You bet, it's great.

**Josef** <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. Could I ask you a special <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_? Would you mind just keeping your voices <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ a little? You're getting a little loud and some people are <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to sleep or watch a film.

**Passenger 2** Why? Who's complaining?

**Passenger 3** Are we making a lot of <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_?

**Josef** No-one's complained, but we can <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ you all in the galley!

**Passenger 2** Oh, OK, no problem.

**Passenger 3** OK.

**Passenger 2** How about <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ drink?

**Josef** Sure, I'll get you another drink if you keep your voices down. Thanks for your <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_.

- 6** How well do you think Josef dealt with the situation? Is there anything you would handle differently?

### LANGUAGE FOCUS

*IF ...*

**Study these sentences.**

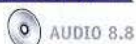
If the situation doesn't get better, then I'll try to find you another seat.

If there's still a problem, then I'll come over.

If there is still a problem, I won't leave you on your own.

I'll get you another drink if you keep your voices down.

### PRONUNCIATION



- 7** Listen and repeat the sentences in *Language focus*.



- 8** Listen and repeat these requests to passengers and crew from the flight attendant. Notice the very polite intonation.

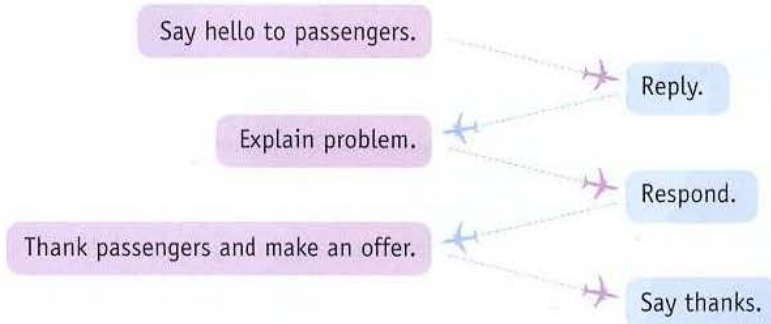
- Could I ask you a special favour?
- Would you mind just keeping the noise down a little?
- Please could you come over to help me?

### SPEAKING

- 9** Work in pairs or groups of three. Role-play a situation like the one in exercise 5. Use your own ideas and follow this format.

**Flight attendant**

**Passenger(s)**



Now swap roles and role-play the situation again. Who dealt with the problem best?



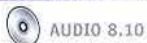
## Managing disruptive passengers

### SPEAKING

- 1 Sometimes difficult situations with passengers get out of control. Passengers become aggressive, insulting or drunk and refuse to do what they are asked. Work with a partner. What are your procedures for dealing with really disruptive passengers? What can you do in situations a–c below? What can't you do?



### LISTENING



- 2 Listen to flight attendants Jenny and Tom and purser Ted dealing with a very disruptive passenger. Answer the questions.

- 1 What is the problem with the passenger?
- 2 What does the passenger want?
- 3 How does Jenny describe the passenger to Tom?
- 4 What does the passenger say he is going to do?
- 5 How do the flight attendants deal with the situation?
- 6 What does Ted say he has to do?
- 7 What does Ted say they will need after landing?
- 8 What does Ted tell Tom to do with the other passengers?

### 3 Complete this report on the incident.

About half an hour before <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, a drunk passenger became <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ because he was refused more <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. He began to <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and scream and it took <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ cabin crew members and other passengers to <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ him. His wrists were eventually <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to a seat by the <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, but he did not <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ down. The captain was informed and the local <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ met the plane on arrival and arrested the passenger.

### LANGUAGE FOCUS

#### EXPRESSING OBLIGATION

#### Study these sentences.

I have to speak to the captain.  
I've got to speak to the captain.  
I must speak to the captain.

We must call the police / security.  
We need to call the police / security.

### PRONUNCIATION

 AUDIO 8.11

### 4 Listen and repeat these sentences expressing obligation. Notice the pronunciation of *have to*.

- You have to sit down, sir.
- I have to speak to the captain.
- You have to stop that now.
- You have to be quiet.
- You have to do what the captain says.

 AUDIO 8.12

### 5 Now listen and practise these sentences you can use for dealing with passengers affected by the incident.

- Would you come to the back of the plane with me, please, madam?
- I can see how upset you are.
- Can you tell me exactly what happened?
- I do apologize. Incidents like this are extremely rare.
- Please don't worry.
- Everything is under control.





# Case study

## READING

### 1 Read the newspaper articles opposite and answer the questions.

- 1 Make a list of the different kinds of unruly and disruptive behaviour mentioned in the articles. Put them in order of seriousness from 1 to 5, where 5 = extremely serious.
- 2 What seems to be the main cause of the bad behaviour you read about? Or are there several reasons for it?

## SPEAKING

### 2 Work with a partner. Discuss the questions about disruptive passengers.

- 1 Discuss the reactions of the cabin crew where they are mentioned in the articles. Do you think that flight attendants are given enough training to deal with unruly passengers?
- 2 Why is the problem of 'air rage' growing? What can be done to prevent or limit it? For example, do you think alcohol should be banned on flights?
- 3 How is airline security and the safety of all on board at risk from disruptive passengers?

## LISTENING

AUDIO 8.13



### 3 Listen to Shon Davis as she answers these questions. Make notes about what she says.

- 1 'Why are difficult passengers the flight attendant's biggest headache?'
- 2 'What was the worst experience you had?'
- 3 'How do you deal with such difficult passengers?'

### 4 Listen again and answer the questions.

- 1 Why does Shon say difficult passengers are 'frustrating'? What did she always try to do?
- 2 Work with a partner. Tell the story of Shon's worst experience in your own words. What did the passenger complain about? How did Shon succeed in changing the passenger's attitude? What did he say as he left the plane?
- 3 Why did the man want to move to Business class? What alternative did Shon find for him? Was he happy with this solution?

## SPEAKING

### 5 Work with a partner. Discuss these questions.

- 1 What is the difference between difficult passengers and disruptive passengers?
- 2 What is your airline's policy on air rage incidents?
- 3 What is the best way to deal with really disruptive passengers? Does airline policy take different cultures and customs into consideration?





Incidents of unruly and disruptive behaviour by passengers on board aircraft appear to be increasing in frequency and severity on flights. It is sometimes referred to as 'air rage'. It can also be defined as any behaviour on board an aircraft which interferes with the crew in the conduct of their duties and disrupts the safe operation of an aircraft. Here are some recent examples.

### FIGHTING PASSENGERS CAUSE PLANE TO DIVERT

A brawl between rival football fans forced a plane to make an emergency landing in Germany last Friday. The men, aged 24 and 36, had been drinking and could not be restrained by cabin crew after they started fighting.

### Vegas flight lands in Denver after air rage incident

A US airliner en route to Las Vegas was diverted to Denver after a passenger tried to open an exterior door on the

plane, officials say. The man had reportedly consumed alcohol before and during the flight. 'There was a disturbance on board involving an unruly passenger, and the pilots decided to divert to Denver,' local police said in a statement.

### Woman who hit attendants jailed after forced landing of Tokyo flight

A 42-year-old woman has been jailed after causing a trans-Pacific flight to be diverted to Anchorage, Alaska.

The woman was aboard the Delta Airlines flight from Tokyo to New York when, about 45 minutes into the flight, she began assaulting a flight attendant who was offering a beverage service. Flight attendants tried to calm her, but

she continued screaming profanities in Japanese and hit four flight attendants before being handcuffed and seat-belted in her seat. She continued to struggle and unbuckled her seatbelt several times, causing flight attendants to set up a 30-minute rotation to watch her. Pilots were forced to dump 70,000 pounds of jet fuel to land in Anchorage and hand her over to local police.

### One too many

A passenger was arrested on Friday after his flight landed on charges that he assaulted and intimidated the flight crew. The man drank five glasses of wine after boarding the flight in Atlanta, Georgia, authorities said. He became abusive when flight

attendants refused to serve him a sixth drink. When the senior flight attendant arrived to try to calm him, he grabbed her arms and hands. Flight attendants armed themselves with a fire extinguisher and positioned drinks trolleys in the aisles in case the man tried to get into the cockpit.

### ABUSIVE FLYER OFFLOADED FROM AIRCRAFT

An aircraft returned to its parking bay after taxiing for take-off to offload a passenger who had become abusive with a cabin crew member. 'The cabin crew member asked him to put his seat upright, but received verbal abuse in response,' said an airline official. It is not known whether the passenger was drunk. When informed of the incident, the captain decided to turn the aircraft back to the parking bay to offload the unruly passenger.

### Drunk passenger jailed after going on rampage at 30,000ft

A drunken airline passenger went on a rampage at 30,000 feet after cabin crew caught him trying to get into the first-class section. During the nine-and-a-half hour flight, the man, who was travelling in Economy class, walked up and down the aisles shouting abuse, reducing passengers to tears and causing his own daughter, aged 15, to go and sit with the crew to hide from him. He was jailed for eight months after pleading guilty to being drunk on an aircraft.

#### Glossary

*a brawl* a fight

*a forced landing* an unscheduled landing

*profanities* abusive language

*to dump* to throw away

*to go on a rampage* to go around causing damage

*to set up a rotation* to take turns in a continuous task