

Minor passenger problems

SPEAKING

Identifying passenger problems

- 1 As a flight attendant, you are expected to deal with all sorts of problems, for example an in-flight entertainment handset that doesn't work.

Work in pairs or small groups. Make a list of other regular, minor passenger problems you can have on flights.



LISTENING



- 2 Listen to a flight attendant dealing with two passenger problems and answer the questions.

- 1 What can't the first passenger do?
- 2 Is his handset broken?
- 3 Does the flight attendant fix the problem?
- 4 Does the second passenger want to watch a TV programme or a film?
- 5 Does the flight attendant fix the problem?

LANGUAGE FOCUS

FINDING OUT THE PROBLEM

Study these questions.

Did you call, sir?
What's the problem?
What's the matter?
How can I help (you)?

PRONUNCIATION



- 3 Listen and repeat the flight attendant's questions. Notice how the intonation goes up at the end in the yes/no questions (1–3), and down in the open questions (4–6).

- 1 Did you call, [↗] sir?
- 2 Your handset?
- 3 [↗] OK?
- 4 What's the [↗] problem?
- 5 What's the [↗] matter?
- 6 How can I [↘] help?

LISTENING



- 4 Listen to four exchanges between passengers and flight attendants. All the passengers have pushed the call button.

Which of these are the four problems? Number them in the order you hear them.

- a ___ a sick child
- b ___ an angry man
- c ___ a crying baby
- d ___ a cold passenger
- e ___ a hungry passenger
- f ___ a noisy group
- g ___ a troublesome neighbour
- h ___ a nervous elderly lady
- i ___ a worried traveller
- j ___ a thirsty teenager

SPEAKING

- 5 The flight attendant has many different roles. Work with a partner. Which of these roles best describes the flight attendant in the problem situations in audio 5.3 above?

Can you think of any other roles a flight attendant might have?

diplomat ■ firefighter ■ referee ■ bank clerk ■ nurse ■ waiter(ress)
nanny ■ lifesaver ■ police officer ■ receptionist ■ friend ■ information officer



- 6 Now discuss these questions with your partner or in small groups.

- Which are the two most important roles, in your opinion?
- Which are the two least important?
- Which roles do you most commonly take?
- What other roles do you sometimes take?

Dealing with problems



SPEAKING

1 Look at the photos. What do you think the flight attendants are saying to these passengers?

LISTENING

2 Listen to how the flight attendants solved the four problems you heard in *Identifying passenger problems*, exercise 4. Answer the questions.



- 1 What does the flight attendant offer to do for the worried traveller?
- 2 What does the flight attendant agree to get the hungry passenger?
- 3 What does the flight attendant offer to get the cold passenger?
- 4 Can the flight attendant get the sick child some paracetamol?
- 5 What does the flight attendant offer to do for the passenger with the sick child?

3 Listen again to the four conversations and complete the sentences.

- 1 I'll check on our arrival time and _____ to you.
- 2 I'll _____ it for you. A sandwich or pot noodles?
- 3 I'll get you a blanket in the _____, if you'd like.
- 4 I'll _____ what I can do.
- 5 I'll _____ if there is a doctor or nurse on board.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

OFFERING TO HELP (1)

We use *will* to make an immediate offer to do something. Study these sentences.

Offering to do something for a passenger

- I'll check on our arrival time and get back to you.
- I'll ask if there is a doctor or nurse on board.
- I'll get you a blanket.
- I'll get it for you.
- I'll get it now.
- I'll show you how it works.
- I'll get you another one.

PRONUNCIATION



4 Listen and repeat the sentences in *Language focus*. Pay particular attention to the way we say the short form *I'll* instead of *I will*.

SPEAKING

5 Work with a partner. Take turns to practise dealing with passenger problems. Use the diagram below to help you.

The problems:

- The video screen doesn't work.
- A baby is crying.
- The reading light goes on and off.
- A neighbour's music is too loud.
- You can't sleep because of a noisy group nearby.
- You can't open the overhead locker.
- The toilet is dirty.
- The seat cushion is wet.
- The headset is broken.

Passenger

Flight attendant

Say there is a problem.

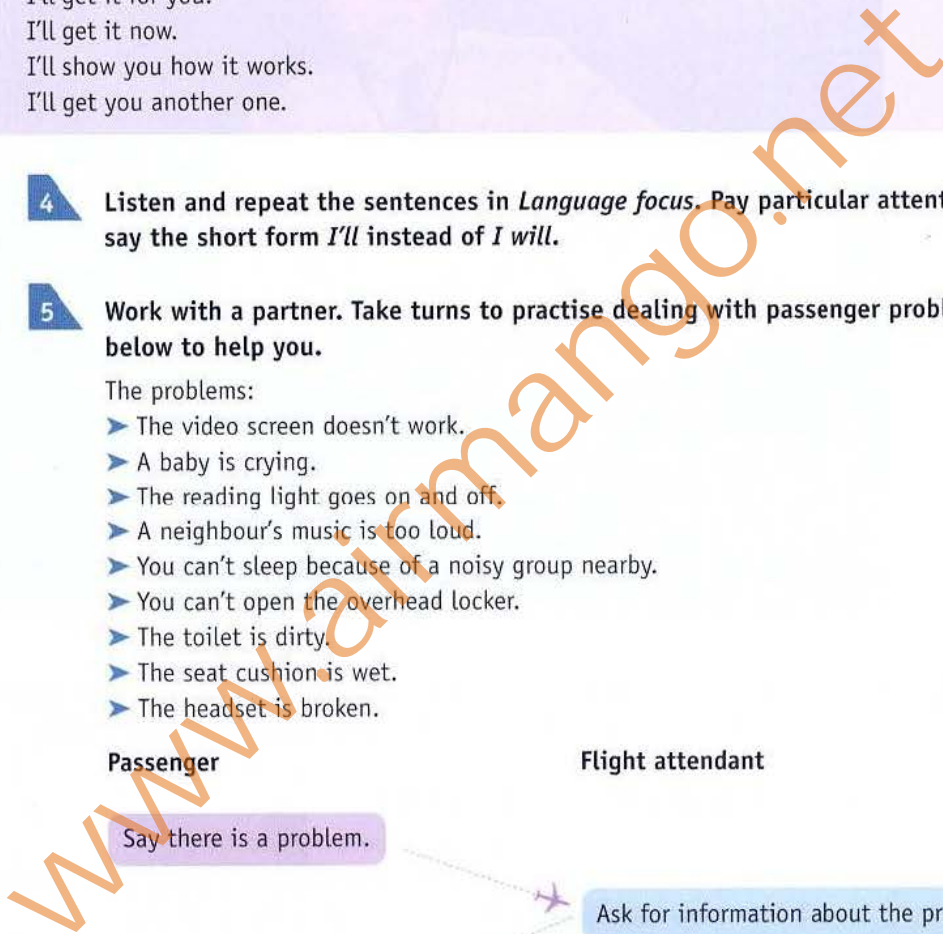
Ask for information about the problem.

Explain the problem.

Deal with the problem.

Offer thanks.

Reply.



Saying sorry

SPEAKING

- 1 Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss these questions.
- ▶ How often do you have to apologize to passengers on a flight?
 - ▶ What are some of the things you have to apologize for?
 - ▶ What makes passengers angry?
 - ▶ How do you make them *less* angry? Do you make excuses or give reasons for the problem? Or do you just apologize?



LISTENING

AUDIO 5.6

- 2 Listen to the flight attendant serving drinks and snacks to four passengers. As you listen, make a note of three things the flight attendant has not got today.

- 3 Listen again and answer the questions.

- 1 Which passenger is the most angry about the situation?
- 2 To which passenger does the flight attendant give a reason or excuse for the problem?
- 3 How many times does the flight attendant use the word *sorry*?
- 4 How many times does the flight attendant apologize?

AUDIO 5.7

- 4 Try to fill in the missing words in this extract from the Listening. Then listen and check your answers.

Flight attendant	What can I ¹ _____ you, sir?
Passenger	Two cheese ² _____ and two diet Cokes, please.
Flight attendant	Oh dear, I <i>am</i> sorry, but we've ³ _____ out of cheese. They've been very ⁴ _____ today. But I can offer you ⁵ _____ sandwiches.
Passenger	I don't believe it – it's the ⁶ _____ old story. You always ⁷ _____ to run out.
Flight attendant	Once again, I can only ⁸ _____, sir. Would you like the chicken?
Passenger	No ⁹ _____, no thank you.
Flight attendant	Sorry ¹⁰ _____ that.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

APOLOGIZING

NOTE

Sorry is often followed by *madam* or *sir*: *I'm sorry, madam. / Sorry, sir.*

Study these sentences.

- Sorry, we don't have any peppermint – my mistake.
- I'm afraid we've only got apple juice and orange juice today.
- I do apologize.
- I am sorry, but we've run out of cheese.
- I can only apologize, sir.
- Sorry about that.
- I'm really sorry, we haven't got any left.

PRONUNCIATION



5

It is very important to sound apologetic when you say you are sorry. Listen and repeat these sentences from *Language focus*, stressing the words in bold. Try to copy the wide range of intonation.

- **Sorry**, we don't have any peppermint – **my** mistake.
- I'm **afraid** we've **only** got **apple** juice and **orange** juice today.
- I **do** apologize.
- I **am** sorry, but we've run out of cheese.
- I can **only** apologize, sir.
- **Sorry** about that.
- I'm **really** sorry, we haven't got any left.

SPEAKING

6

Work with a partner. Take turns to practise apologizing for problems. You can use the ideas below or your own ideas. Try to give a reason or excuse for the problem. Use the diagram to help you.

The problems:

- The cabin is too hot.
- There isn't a vegetarian option on the menu.
- The choice of in-flight movies is poor.
- The seats are uncomfortable.



Passenger

Flight attendant

Say what the problem is.

Apologize fully.

Accept / Don't accept the apology.

Give a reason for the problem.

Accept the explanation.

Apologize again briefly.

Case study

READING

1 Read *Pickpocket strikes on flight from Tokyo to Paris* opposite and answer the questions.

- 1 What exactly happened on board this flight?
- 2 How many passengers were affected, and in which part of the aircraft?
- 3 Did the airline spokesperson admit any responsibility for what happened?

SPEAKING

2 Work with a partner. Discuss these questions.

- 1 How could such a serious theft happen in a secure environment? Could the cabin crew have done anything to prevent it?
- 2 Do you think it is the responsibility of the airline to find stolen cash and belongings? What about finding the thief? What is your airline's policy?
- 3 Make a list of five common problems which you can usually solve. Think of two problems you were not able to solve. Why not?
- 4 What is the most unusual problem you have experienced on a flight?

LISTENING

AUDIO 5.9



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

- 1 'In general, are passengers difficult to please?'
- 2 'What's the most common minor complaint?'
- 3 'Is the passenger always right?'

4 Listen again and answer the questions.

- 1 How much customer service training do most airlines provide?
- 2 What are the two most common complaints Shon mentions? Is this also your experience?
- 3 Even if you think a passenger is wrong about something, what is it important that you do?

SPEAKING

5 Work with a partner. Discuss these questions.

- 1 The pickpocket problem was unusual, but in general is it the flight attendant's job to make sure that passengers' problems are always solved?
- 2 How do you feel as you board your flights knowing that you are likely to have passenger problems? Tense and nervous? Or do you look forward to the challenge?
- 3 Do you agree with Shon about seating being the most common passenger problem? Give reasons for your answer.



Pickpocket strikes on flight from Tokyo to Paris

A pickpocket stole thousands of pounds' worth of cash from Business class passengers as they slept on a flight from Tokyo to Paris.

Cabin crew did not spot the thief at work as he went through wallets and handbags during the 12-hour overnight flight.

Passengers woke to find large sums of cash missing. The captain alerted police, who met the Boeing 777 jet as it landed at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport on Tuesday morning, but they were unable to identify the thief.

One passenger told police that about £3,000 in mixed currencies had vanished from her handbag.

Five others, who had paid up to £5,000 each for their tickets, said they had also lost thousands in cash.

One told the French news website *Le Post*: 'Most long-haul travellers sleep on overnight flights like this. But at the prices we pay for tickets, you would expect the cabin crew to be watching over us and making sure our belongings are safe.'

At the prices we pay for tickets, you would expect the cabin crew to be watching over us and making sure our belongings are safe.

A spokesperson for the airline said it could not comment on this particular incident, but added: 'As a general rule, passengers' belongings in the

cabin are their responsibility, while luggage in the hold is the airline's responsibility.'



Glossary

a pickpocket someone who steals from people's bags and pockets
to spot to notice

a thief someone who steals things

a wallet pocket-sized holder for money

large sums of cash large amounts of money

to alert to warn someone, to make someone aware

to vanish to disappear

the hold the place where large suitcases are stored in a plane