

## Customer care

### Activity 1: My best and worst experiences as a customer

#### Introduction

Every learner will have experiences as a customer that provide a valuable starting point for thinking about customer care. This short activity uses those experiences. It is particularly useful for opening up the topic of customer care and getting everyone involved.

The activity invites learners to reflect on and draw conclusions from their previous experiences as customers, both within their own college or workplace or outside it. When learners reflect on their experiences, they begin to see relationships between what they think and do and what happens as a result. These insights result in deeper understanding and emotional, affective change.

The activity also provides good opportunities for learners to practise their speaking and listening skills. It is particularly helpful as a 'starter' and can be used in combination with any of the other customer care activities.

#### Learning objectives/outcomes

Learners should be able to:

- improve their ability to reflect on their own experiences as a customer analyse and evaluate those experiences.

#### Resources required

- Copies of Sheet 1.1: Some principles of good customer care.
- Mini-whiteboards (optional).
- Interactive whiteboard (optional).
- Paper and pens.

#### Starting points

The activity provides a starting point for learning about customer care. No previous study of customer care is required.

## Planning learning in multiple environments

This activity can be integrated into individual learning plans in a number of ways. For example, as:

- preparation for work experience
- an activity in the workplace, perhaps with another learner who is on placement at the same company
- part of a series of classroom-based sessions on customer care.

It could be revisited later when learners are more experienced and may have new insights.

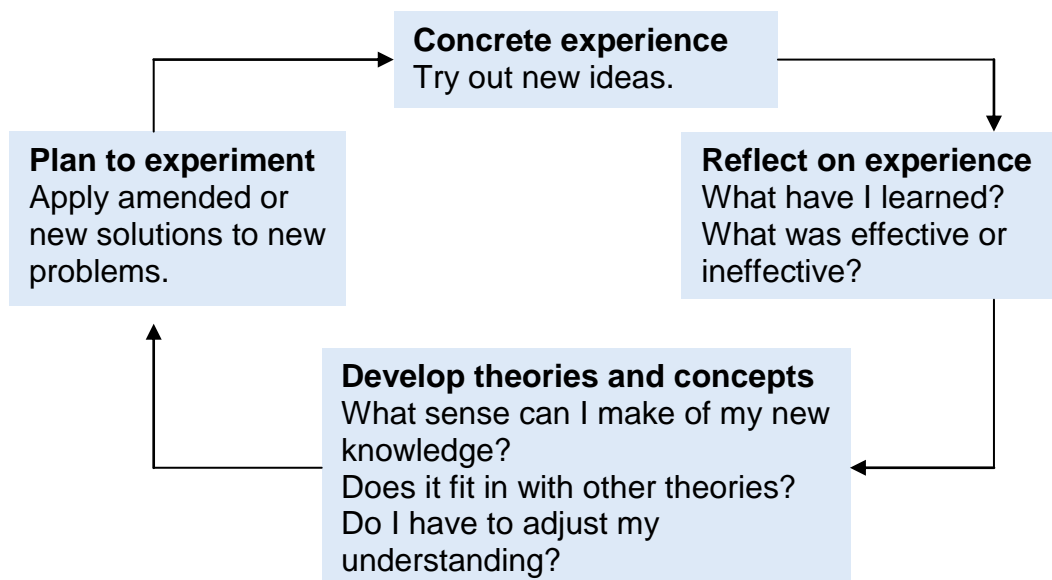
### Suggested approach

The activity asks learners to identify relevant experiences of being a customer and to reflect on the quality of the experience.

Reflection is an essential component of the experiential learning cycle (see **Figure 1** below). It helps learners to interpret and make sense of their experiences. In doing this, they develop concepts that have meaning for them personally and which they can later put to the test in real situations.

Wherever you can, take learners through the complete cycle even if this has to be spread over more than one session.

**Figure 1: An experiential learning cycle.**



Based on Kolb, D.A. 1984. *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

You will find more information about the experiential learning approach in Part 3 of the **Cross-curricular themes: continuing professional development guide**.

### **Stage 1**

Invite learners to work in pairs. Explain the learning objectives and set the task.

“We all have experience of being a customer. Tell your partner about your best experience as a customer and your worst experience as a customer. Be as specific as you can. Ask each other questions to find out more detail.”

Set a time limit and remind learners to share the time equally.

### **Stage 2**

While the learners are talking, walk around the pairs, listening to their conversations. This way, you will find out how much they understand the topic and the level of their speaking and listening skills.

### **Stage 3**

Ask each pair to agree who they would like to nominate for the ‘Best customer care award’ and the ‘Worst customer care award’. If you have mini-whiteboards, one learner can write the nomination for ‘best’ and one for ‘worst’. Ask them to be prepared to explain **why** they have nominated a particular organisation or individual.

### **Stage 4: Consolidating, checking and reflecting on learning**

Everyone gets a chance to present a nomination (for ‘best’ or ‘worst’) and the reasoning behind their decisions.

Use questions to prompt learners to justify and clarify their nominations. Ask them to identify which principles of good customer care (as described on **Sheet 1.1**) have been illustrated in the experiences they are describing. If additional principles emerge from the discussion, invite learners to add them to the list.

Try to find ways of relating the principles to both internal and external customers.

Do not be tempted into providing answers. Instead, encourage learners to go beyond generalisations such as ‘because they’re rubbish’. Use probes and prompts that encourage learners to develop high level skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Try some of the following suggestions.

<b>Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you mean when you say ‘they were hopeless’ (or ‘they were great’)?</li> <li>• Why do you think that?</li> <li>• What was it about the way they spoke to you that you didn’t like?</li> <li>• Did anybody notice that...?</li> <li>• What was the problem with...?</li> <li>• How is... similar to...?</li> <li>• Can you distinguish between...?</li> <li>• Who has another example?</li> </ul>
<b>Synthesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would happen if...?</li> <li>• How many ways can you...?</li> <li>• Suggest an idea that would...</li> <li>• What would be your way of dealing with...?</li> <li>• Suggest a way of doing... that would...</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me a better solution to...</li> <li>• How can you justify that decision?</li> <li>• What changes to... would you suggest?</li> <li>• Do you think... is a good or a bad thing?</li> <li>• How would you feel if...?</li> <li>• How many ways can you...?</li> </ul>

Invite learners to reflect on the learning process. Here are some suggestions of questions you could ask.

- What did you enjoy about working in a small group?
- What did you find difficult about working in a small group?
- What will you do differently the next time you work in a small group?

### Alternative approaches

If you are working one to one with a learner, perhaps in the workplace, you can still use the main part of this activity. You can share your own best and worst experiences with your learners and ask them about their experiences.

### Differentiation to meet individual needs

This activity allows learners to engage with the task at their own level. Pairing a less confident learner with someone more confident could help both to complete the activity.

Less confident learners might benefit from a more structured approach. For example, you could invite them first to identify times when they are customers. Then ask them to complete a worksheet containing the following:

- Think of a time when you had a really good experience.
- What did the person say or do that gave you a good experience? Describe this in as much detail as you can.
- How did you feel at the end of the experience?
- Think of a time when you had a really bad experience.
- What did the person say or do that gave you a bad experience? Describe this in as much detail as you can.
- How did you feel at the end of the experience?

If you would like to give more confident learners a greater challenge, you could:

- invite them to describe how their experiences of poor customer service could have been handled differently
- re-enact this in front of the group
- facilitate a whole-group discussion of what they did.

**This would complete the experiential learning cycle.**

A further extension for confident learners would be to invite them to think beyond the individual giving customer care and to consider instead how care is built into and demonstrated in organisations' policies. They could consider their college or their place of work and write a short feedback report to give to someone with decision-making powers.

(An example of how good customer care might be reflected in an organisation's policies would be a radio station that provides frequent updates on local traffic conditions: poor customer care would be a public service television station that never puts on programmes to suit minority groups.)

### **Challenges – what learners might do next**

Learners can work in small groups to compile their own lists of the 'features of good and poor customer care'. This acknowledges the conclusions they have drawn from their reflection and encourages them to generalise and begin to form theories.

Alternatively, they can proceed to **Activity 3: Principles of good customer care.**

## Embedding literacy, language and numeracy (LLN)

Every learning activity includes many different opportunities to develop LLN skills. Always try to find a naturally-occurring opportunity where learners can immediately appreciate the relevance and importance of the skills they are learning to use.

Your LLN specialist will be able to help you to identify specific levels and curriculum references relevant to this activity and to create engaging learning activities to develop the skills.

The priority LLN skills that learners will need to complete this activity are speaking and listening to share and respond to ideas.

**At Level 1**, speak clearly in a way that suits the situation.

- Understand that pace, volume and precision of articulation vary depending on the situation.  
(Adult literacy core curriculum reference SLc/L1.1)

**At Level 2**, speak clearly in a way that suits the situation.

- Be able to sustain a clear, confident and appropriate style in formal and social exchanges of varying length.  
(Adult literacy core curriculum reference SLc/L2.1)

English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) learners should cope well with the activity as it uses everyday experiences and vocabulary.

### Useful activities might include:

- Ask learners to imagine that they are returning a faulty purchase to a shop and to rehearse what they will say to the customer care representative and the response they would like to get. If learners work in pairs, one could return the faulty purchase and the other could then respond appropriately.
- Ask learners to imagine that another learner has not contributed to a project in the way that was agreed. Working in pairs, one learner expresses their dissatisfaction and the other responds appropriately.

## **Sheet 1.1: Some principles of good customer care**

1. Be approachable and welcoming.
2. Ask the right questions to find out what your customer needs.
3. Listen carefully and show that you understand how the customer is feeling.
4. Take responsibility for meeting your customer's needs – don't leave it to others or blame others.
5. Treat every customer as an individual and treat them with respect.
6. Be responsive. Go the extra mile to help the customer.
7. Be reliable. Don't make promises you can't keep.
8. Turn a complaint into something positive by dealing with it effectively.

**Session plan**

**Aim:** To provide a starting point for thinking about customer care by asking learners to reflect on their own experiences as a customer and to identify some principles of good customer care.

**Learning objectives/outcomes**

Learners should be able to:

- improve their ability to reflect on their own experiences as a customer
- analyse and evaluate those experiences.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Teacher plan</b>	<b>Learner activity</b>	<b>Resources</b>
0-5 min	<b>Stage 1</b> Introduce learning objectives and set task.		
5-15 min	<b>Stage 2</b> Listen to discussions to gain insight into learners' understanding of the topic.	In pairs, share and listen to each other's best and worst experiences as a customer.	
15-25 min	<b>Stage 3</b> Ask pairs to nominate best and worst customer care award, and prepare to explain their nomination.	Nominate a best and worst customer care award.  Prepare to explain your nomination.	Mini-whiteboards. Pens.
25-40 min	<b>Stage 4</b> Ask questions, prompting learners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• justify and clarify their nominations</li> <li>• identify key principles of good customer care.</li> </ul>	Share and explain nominations.	<b>Sheet 1.1.</b>

### **Assessment of learning objectives/outcomes**

- Monitoring of pair discussions and feedback.
- Learners reflect on what they have learnt and how they learnt.

### **Differentiation to meet individual needs**

- Composition of pairs to encourage collaboration and learning from each other.
- Offer support according to learners' identified learning needs.
- When working one-to-one with a learner, share your own best and worst experiences and ask them about their experiences.

#### **Teacher evaluation**

Consider which parts of the session were effective and why.

#### **Learner feedback**

Consider whether the activities were suitable for all learners and whether the session helped to develop the expert learners.

### **Personal, learning and thinking skills developed**

- Team workers:
  - Collaborating with others to work towards a common goal.
- Reflective learners:
  - Evaluating experiences and learning to inform future progress.

### **Literacy, language and numeracy skills developed**

#### **Language**

At Level 1 and 2, use speaking and listening skills to share and respond to ideas.