



Problems and suggestions

Lesson code: 11F1-F6CC-ZURI

INTERMEDIATE

 American English

1 Warm-up

What typical problems do you face in your work? How do you usually deal with them?

2 Phrases with 'problem' and 'suggestion'

Which of the following verbs usually go before 'a problem' and 'a suggestion'? Which can go before both words?

ignore	have	make	offer	accept	solve
	handle	deal with	reject	create	

Now complete the following each sentence with suitable verbs from above in their correct forms:

1. The accountant suggested several ways to _____ our cash flow problem.
2. The consultant advised us to focus more on training, but his suggestion was _____ .
3. Our customer relations specialist _____ customers' problems.
4. Last year's economic downturn _____ serious problems for many companies.
5. Marcel _____ some very interesting suggestions at the meeting yesterday. We are going to take them into consideration.
6. Her suggestions seemed very practical, so we decided to _____ them.

3 Listening

The managers of a management training and consultancy firm are holding a meeting to discuss how to boost sales of their new training program. The following suggestions are made. Listen to the dialogue and tick the suggestions that are accepted:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Increase spending on newspaper advertising. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advertising on television. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advertising on local radio news stations. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advertising in a new HR trade journal. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Focus on PR activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> |



4 Making suggestions



You can review this worksheet online at www.linguahouse.com/ex

Review your flashcards at least 3-5 times a week for 20 minutes to keep the material fresh in your memory.

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Study the following expressions. Listen to the recording again and tick the ones that you hear.

ASKING FOR A SUGGESTION

- What should we do?
- What do you suggest we do?
- Any other ideas?

MAKING A SUGGESTION

- Perhaps we could try ...-ing.
- We could ... That might work.
- Maybe we should ...?
- What about ...-ing?
- Why don't we ...?
- Maybe we could try that?

ACCEPTING A SUGGESTION

- I suppose that could be worth trying.
- I guess we could try that.
- That sounds very interesting.
- Good idea!

REJECTING A SUGGESTION

- I'm not sure about that.
- That's not such a good idea, to be honest.
- I'm afraid that's out of the question.
- I don't like that idea at all.
- You must be joking!

Which of the expressions above would you use to strongly accept or reject a suggestion? Which would you use to tentatively accept or reject a suggestion?

5 Role play 1

Work in a group. Take turns to select and read out a problem from the list below. Ask the other students for suggestions and accept or reject them, giving your reasons.

1. You want to improve your English, but you have little time to attend regular classes.
2. It's your niece's birthday. She is 12 years old and you have no idea what to get her as a present.
3. You have just won \$500,000 in the lottery, but you have not yet decided how to spend the money.
4. You are tired of taking the bus to work every day. You would like to buy a car but you don't have much spare money at the moment.
5. You want to buy a new phone, but you are not sure which model to get.
6. Your mother-in-law is coming to your house for dinner. You want to cook her something nice but you don't have much time.
7. You have to submit an important report to your boss, but your laptop has just broken down and you have lost all the data. You don't know what to say to him.
8. You are the manager of the production department of a manufacturing company. One of your most efficient employees has been persistently turning up late for work recently.
9. It's nearly summer and you have not yet decided where to go on your vacations.
10. One of your coworkers has recently quit his job, and you have had to take on a lot of additional responsibilities. You need to relax and relieve the stress, but you don't know how.



6 Role play 2

Work in a group. Imagine you are all members of the same department. Choose one of the problems below and have a discussion on how to deal with it.

1. One of your main customers hasn't paid you in three months. You want to put some pressure on them to pay but you don't want to lose their business.
2. You work for a multimedia production company. You are currently making a documentary on wine-making in France. Unfortunately, the main consultant, who was supposed to be featured in the program, has fallen ill and is unable to continue working with you. The filming is scheduled to start in three days' time.
3. You are an office furniture manufacturer. A new competitor has entered the market with a similar but much cheaper product line as yours. A few of your main customers have decided to start purchasing from them.



3 Listening

- Bob:** OK, as you all know, our new management training programs aren't selling as well as we'd been hoping. I realize that the economic climate isn't too favorable, but I still expect sales to be higher than they are. So, are there any ways we could support our current sales and telemarketing activities?
- John:** Perhaps we could try increasing our newspaper advertising expenditure? Maybe that'll work?
- Bob:** I'm not sure about that. Advertising in newspapers doesn't work that well for the type of business-to-business service that we provide. We've already tried placing ads in the business sections of several local papers and it hasn't been very productive.
- Marta:** I have a suggestion. We've never tried advertising on the radio or on local television. Maybe we could try that?
- Bob:** I'm afraid that's out of the question. Advertising on television and radio is hugely expensive and it would be highly unproductive for us. We don't have the budget for it anyway.
- Marta:** OK, but we could try one of the local radio news stations. A lot of their listeners are business people. We could buy a slot during a local business news broadcast that's appropriate for our line of work. That might work.
- Bob:** Hmm ... I guess we could try that.
- John:** What about putting a full-page ad in that new HR trade journal, HR Ideas?
- Bob:** Oh, yes. Good idea! But I'm not sure about a full-page though. We could start with something smaller and see what sort of impact it has. Any other ideas?
- Marta:** Why don't we focus more on PR activities? The consultancy firm I worked for a few years ago hired a PR firm and they managed to generate a lot of useful publicity. I remember we had potential customers calling us all the time. I think I still have a few contacts within the company.
- Bob:** That sounds very interesting. Do you remember what sort of fees they charged?
- Marta:** It wasn't too expensive as I remember. I'll try to find out and get back to you on that later today.
- Bob:** Great. So John, you contact HR Ideas and get some information on their prices for different-sized ads. Marta, if you could also contact the local radio stations and email me some details, that would be great. We'll schedule another meeting to discuss the next step.



2 Phrases with 'problem' and 'suggestion'

have a problem/ suggestion
 accept a problem/ suggestion
 ignore a problem/ suggestion

make a suggestion

NOTE: 'make a problem' is also possible in certain contexts, e.g. make a problem harder/easier/worse etc.

offer a suggestion
 reject a suggestion

deal with a problem
 handle a problem
 solve a problem
 create a problem

1. solve
 4. created

2. ignored/rejected
 5. offered/made

3. deals with/ handles
 6. accept

3 Listening

Play the audio file or use your mobile device to scan the QR code (make sure you have installed a QR code reader app and can access the internet on your device).

- Advertising on local radio news stations.
- Advertising in a new HR trade journal.
- Focus on PR activities.

4 Making suggestions

- ✓ I guess we could try that.
- ✓ Any other ideas?
- ✓ That sounds very interesting.
- ✓ Good idea!
- ✓ Perhaps we could try ...-ing.
- ✓ We could ... That might work.
- ✓ I'm not sure about that.
- ✓ What about ...-ing?
- ✓ I'm afraid that's out of the question.
- ✓ Why don't we ...?
- ✓ Maybe we could try that?

Strongly accept a suggestion: That sounds very interesting; Good idea!

Tentatively accept a suggestion: I suppose that could be worth trying; I guess we could try that.

Strongly reject a suggestion: I'm afraid that's out of the question; I'm afraid I don't like that idea at all; You must be joking!

Tentatively reject a suggestion: I'm not sure about that; That's not such a good idea, to be honest.

5 Role play 1

Encourage the students to use expressions from the lesson, changing the pronouns ('we' to 'I' or 'you') where necessary, e.g. What shall I do? What don't you...? etc.

