

Reader

2

Come Together



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Chapter 1

Informative



Social practice:

Express complaints about a product.

Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Have you ever received an unwanted or faulty present?
- 2 Do you always keep the receipts of things you buy?
- 3 There is a saying: "The customer is always right."
Do you agree?



When you buy products or services you become a consumer, and as consumers we all have **rights** that protect us in case the product or service we bought was not to our complete satisfaction. Most people don't know these rights, and it is frequent that they keep the unwanted product and remain with a feeling of having lost their money.

You must know that there are six basic rights consumers have.

1 The right to safety: Consumers have the right to be protected from products and services that are either not safe or dangerous.

2 The right to be informed: Consumers have the right to know all the information about the product or service they are buying; for example, contents, place of origin, production date, etc., so that they can make an informed choice between products.

3 The right to choose: Consumers have the right to buy the product or service of their choice without anyone trying to influence their decision.

right (n) – something that you are morally or legally allowed to do or have

4 The right to be heard: Consumers have the right to be heard in case they have a **complaint**. That is why most countries have government institutions which protect consumer rights.

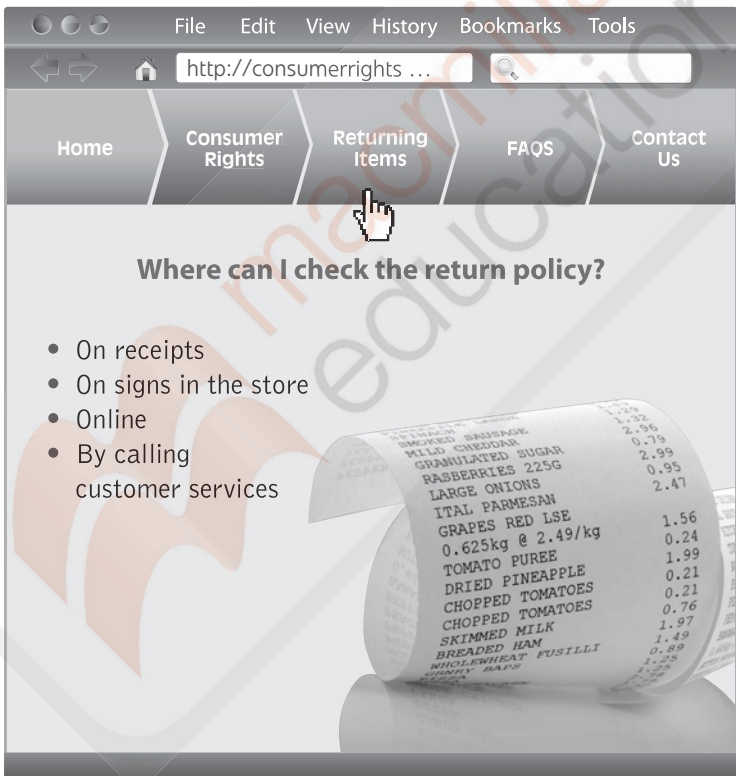
5 The right to compensation: Consumers have the right to compensation, retribution, or indemnification for a faulty product or service.

6 The right to a healthy environment: Consumers have a right to a safe and healthy environment.



complaint (n) – a written or spoken statement in which someone says they are not satisfied with something

Consumers can only return or ask for a refund of non-defective products or services if the company has a return **policy**. That is why it is important to read the company's return policy carefully before you buy a product or service. Stores and companies are not required to have a return policy, but if they do have one, they have to follow it.



policy (n) – a set of plans or actions agreed on by a government, political party, business, or other group



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What do I need to return an item?

- **The receipt or gift receipt:** Always keep your receipt and take it with you to the store when you return your item.
- **The original packaging and tag:** It is very important to keep the original packaging and tag, so don't throw them away until you are sure you are happy with the item you bought.



Tip

Remember:
Keep the original packaging! Most stores will accept returns as long as the item is unused, in perfect condition, and in its original packaging.

receipt (n) – a document that you get from someone showing that you have given them money or goods

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What happens if I change my mind about something I bought?

Customers cannot always get a **refund** simply because they do not like something, it is the wrong size, or they have changed their mind. In this case, stores usually offer store credit, but don't have any legal obligation to return a customer's money.

What happens if I received a gift I don't want?

There is no legal obligation for a store to exchange an unwanted gift, but most stores will usually exchange a gift for another similar item or provide store credit which customers can use to buy anything in the same store.

Tip If you buy a gift for someone, make sure to ask for a gift receipt, so in case they don't like it or it doesn't fit, they can exchange the gift.

refund (n) – money that was yours that you get again, especially because you have decided you do not want a bought item

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What happens if the company does not have a return policy but the item is faulty?

Consumers have a right to return something and get their money back if the product or service is faulty, but this must be done within 30 days of purchase. If more than 30 days have passed, the retailer may repair or replace the item.

What items cannot be returned?

- DVDs, music, and computer software if the seal or packaging has been broken.
- Perishable items like food and flowers.
- Specially made items that have been personalized; for example, an engraved ring.



packaging (n) – the boxes, bottles, plastic, etc. used for wrapping products so that they can be sold



Let's take a look at Tanya's experience. Her grandmother gave her a turtleneck sweater for her birthday, but Tanya feels that this kind of sweaters choke her. So, she decided to go to the store where her grandmother bought the sweater.

"Good morning! My name is Sandra. How can I help you today?" asked the store clerk.

"I would like to return this turtleneck sweater, please," replied Tanya as she took it out of the bag.

"What's wrong with it?" asked the clerk.

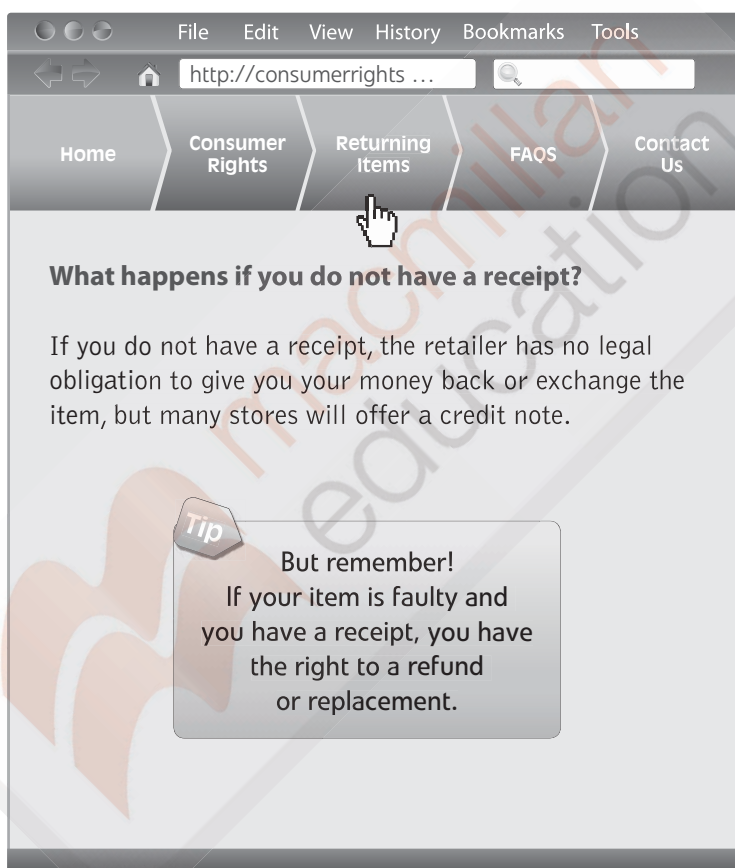
"Oh, nothing is wrong with it. It was a present from my grandmother, but I don't like turtleneck sweaters. I get **claustrophobic**."

"I'm afraid we don't give refunds if the item is not defective, but we could give you store credit that you can spend anywhere in the store to buy anything with the same price."

"That's perfect! Thank you."

claustrophobic (adj) – feeling afraid because you are in a small space or in a closed place

Tanya found a V-neck sweater the same color and price as the turtleneck. She showed the new sweater to the clerk and she asked Tanya to **fill out** a form and to sign a receipt.



fill out (v) – to add information such as your name or address in the empty spaces on an official document



Now that you know your rights as a customer, remember:

- to ask for a gift receipt when you buy a gift so that the person receiving it can change it in case there is a problem with it,
- to open your gifts carefully so that the packaging and **tag** are not broken and you can return it in case you need to do it,
- not to wait too much time to take the product back to the store,
- to look for the return policy on the store's website or phone customer services to ask about it,
- to be very careful when buying products that cannot be returned,
- not to throw the receipt until you are sure you are going to keep the product.

tag (n) – a small piece of paper or other material that is fixed to something to give information about it, such as its price

Extension Exercises

1  **Work in pairs. Discuss and answer the questions.**

Listen to a fragment of Tanya's experience and compare your answers with her experience.

- 1 What do you do if you don't like a present you receive?
- 2 Have you ever exchanged an item which is not defective? Why?
- 3 How do you return or exchange products where you live?
- 4 Why is it important to know the return policy when you buy products?
- 5 Is it important to be polite when you make a complaint? Why?

2 **Work in groups. Discuss the questions with your partners.**

- 1 Have you ever made a complaint about a product? What was it like?
- 2 Do you think it would have been different if the salesclerk or you had a different attitude? Why?

Further Practice Resources

You can use the following links to learn more about consumer rights:

<https://www.gob.mx/profeco/>

<http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/1386/the-eight-basic-consumer-rights/>

Glossary

change your mind (exp) – to change a decision or an opinion

choice (n) – the opportunity or right to choose between different things

choke (v) – to squeeze someone's neck so they cannot breathe

clerk (n) – someone whose job is to serve people in a store. The British word is shop assistant

consumer (n) – someone who buys and uses goods and services

credit (n) – an arrangement to receive goods from a store or money from a bank and pay for it later

defective (adj) – not made correctly, or not working correctly

engraved (adj) – to cut words or pictures into a hard surface such as stone, metal, or glass

exchange (v) – to give someone something in return for something that they give you

FAQS (n) – abbreviation for frequently asked questions, a list of questions with answers provided, intended to help people understand or use something, especially on the Internet

faulty (adj) – not working correctly or made correctly

fit (v) – if someone or something fits somewhere, they are small enough or the right size and shape to go there

item (n) – an individual thing, usually one of several things in a group or on a list

perishable (adj) – perishable food decays after a short time, especially if it is not kept cold

present (n) – something that you give to someone, for example to celebrate a special occasion such as a birthday

provide (v) – to give someone something that they want or need

purchase (n) – the process of buying something

replacement (n) – someone or something that takes the place or does the job of another

retailer (n) – a person or company that sells goods directly to the public for their own use

retribution (n) – punishment that someone deserves because they have done something very bad

return (v) – to put, send, or take something back to the place where it came from

safety (n) – a place or situation in which you are protected from danger or harm

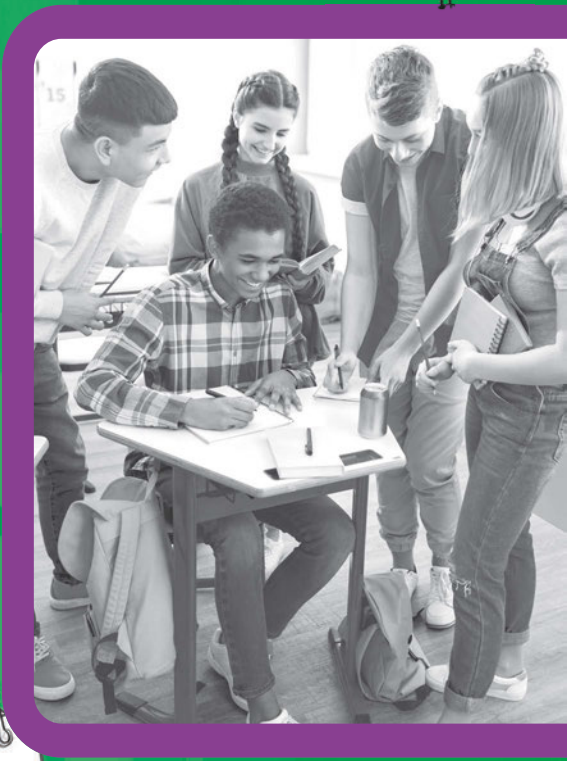
sign (v) – to write your name on something in your own personal way

size (n) – how large or small something is

turtleneck (n) – a high neck that folds over on a sweater

unwanted (adj) – used about something that you no longer need or want

within (prep) – before the end of a period of time



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