



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Returning an Item

Topic: Shopping Skills

Level: Advanced

Practice on Your Own

Imagine that you are living or traveling in a country where the language is spoken. You go shopping and purchase some items such as books, CDs, DVDs, or clothing. But when you get back to your home or hotel room, you realize that there is a problem with one of the items. You need to return to the store and try to get a refund or exchange the item.

- First think about the initial shopping trip. How will you greet the shopkeeper(s) or employee(s)? Will you go and find the items you want in the store, or will you need to ask the shopkeeper who will get the items for you? How can you ask about prices? Are the prices fixed or will you need to bargain? Can you pay with a credit or debit card or do you need to have cash? Do you need to pay for everything up front or can the shopkeeper keep a tab for you?
- Now think about going back to ask for a refund or exchange. Will you need to bring a receipt? How will you explain the problem? (The book is missing some pages, the CD doesn't play, the shirt has a hole in it, etc.) How can you ask for your money back or to exchange the item? What if you want a refund but the shopkeeper only offers to let you exchange the item? What if you want to exchange the item for a similar one but the store is sold out of that type?
- Practice these conversations out loud. Try out different variations – different items, different defects, different issues when you try to return or exchange the item...

Practice in Conversation Session

- To warm up, tell your conversation partner and fellow students what item(s) you will be shopping for and what kind of defect you will discover.
- Role play the initial shopping trip. Use culturally appropriate greetings, ask for what you want, and bargain if appropriate.
- Then role play going back to return or exchange an item. Make sure to explain the problem and show a receipt if necessary. Ask to get your money back or exchange the item. Be prepared to negotiate with the shopkeeper if she/he does not immediately give you what you want.
- Have a follow-up conversation with your conversation partner and fellow students. Have you ever been in a similar situation? How did you resolve it? Compare shops in the U.S. and in the country/ies where the language is spoken in terms of prices/bargaining, methods of payment, receipts, return/exchange policies, etc.

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