

Career Exploration for the ESOL Classroom

Human Services: Customer Service



Teacher Guide

Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators

CAREER EXPLORATION FOR THE ESOL CLASSROOM

Human Services: Customer Service

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Overview of the Teacher’s Guide	1
Overview of Student Workbook	2
A-Z Call Center: Customer Service Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan	4
Introducing the Lesson	4
Developing Academic and Career Skills.....	4
Taking It the Next Step.....	6
Handout: Greeting the Customer.....	7
Handout: Sample Greetings	8
Handout: Skills for Customer Service	9
Different Paths – Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan	10
Introducing the Lesson	10
Developing Academic and Career Skills.....	10
Taking It the Next Step.....	11
Handout: Steps for Dealing with Difficult Customers	12
Handout: Mystery Shopper.....	13
So Many Careers – Ivan and Lucas	14
Introducing the Lesson	14
Developing Academic and Career Skills.....	14
Taking It the Next Step.....	15
Glossary	17

Introduction

Career Exploration for the ESOL Classroom provides students with an introduction to different career clusters. While learning about various careers, students will also learn that skills in reading, writing, language, and speaking and listening are integral to their success in the workplace. The content within this course of study provides students with an introduction to various career pathways.

This section of **Career Exploration for the ESOL Classroom** focuses on different careers in the customer service industry. In Florida, customer service is one of the fastest-growing careers with a 9% – 17% projected growth from 2008 – 2018.

From account managers to call center representatives to sales staff to customer service agents, the list of career paths is endless, and so are the job opportunities.

The focus of this career path is to interact with customers to provide information in response to inquiries about products and services and to handle and resolve complaints. Many entry-level customer service skills are learned through on-the-job training. However, supervisory and managerial positions may require postsecondary education.

Topics addressed provide students with an introduction to the customer service industry with a focus on three different types of positions. The lessons do not prepare students to be able to perform the skills needed in the various occupations. That is for a postsecondary program or an on-the-job training program to accomplish. What this course does provide is an introduction to different career options in the field of customer service.

Overview of the Teacher's Guide

This **Teacher's Guide** was developed to provide the instructor with tools to assist students in better understanding the different jobs available in the area of customer service while they are engaged in activities that connect with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education.

The design of each lesson in the **Teacher's Guide** is:

- College and Career Readiness Standards
- Introducing the Lesson
- Developing Academic and Career Skills
- Going the Next Step
- Handouts
- Glossary

The chart at the beginning of each lesson in the **Teacher's Guide** highlights selected **College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards**. This is intended to provide instructors with an overview of the academic standards that will be integrated into the contextualized learning approach of the lesson.

Each lesson begins with **Introducing the Lesson**. Instructors are provided with ideas on how to introduce the lesson in such a way as to give students the necessary background information on the topic as addressed in the corresponding student workbook scenario. The introduction also provides suggestions that involve students in an activity that connects to the lesson. Instructors should cover the information in the introduction prior to having the class read the scenario.

The **Developing Academic and Career Skills** section connects to both the student workbook scenario and specific anchor standards as identified in the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. These anchor standards are identified at the beginning of each lesson in the **Teacher's Guide**.

The contextualized approach provides instructors with suggestions on how to teach the exploration of customer service careers, while integrating academic skills. All activities provide practice in speaking and listening skills, as well as reading, writing, and language.

Copies of reading materials, activities, worksheets, and templates are provided in the **Handouts** section of the **Teacher's Guide**. These handouts can be duplicated for students to use in the classroom and as resources for future study.

Going the Next Step provides the instructor with additional activities to use in the classroom or as homework assignments.

Handouts are located at the end of each lesson. These handouts can be printed to be used by students in the classroom. Some handouts provide information on the career for use by the teacher. Answer keys are provided, as necessary, as part of this section.

The **Glossary** in the **Teacher's Guide** is the same **Glossary** provided within the **Student Workbook**. Please note that the definitions were chosen to approximate the usage of the term in the scenario, rather than being an inclusive list of all definitions for a word.

Overview of Student Workbook

The **Student Workbook** should be provided for each student. The design of each workbook lesson includes the following sections:

- Vocabulary
- Scenario
- What Do I Think?

Vocabulary words are listed at the beginning of each scenario. If students have questions regarding the meaning of the words, have them consult the **Glossary** at

the back of the workbook. The **Glossary** definitions were chosen to approximate the usage of the term in the scenario.

The **Scenario** for each lesson is based on real-world situations. The scenarios follow individuals as they explore different careers in the customer service industry.

Each scenario is accompanied by activities and handouts that are connected with the identified anchor standards and/or information on the selected career. These activities and handouts are provided in the **Teacher's Guide**.

What Do I Think? questions are situational judgment types of questions. Often these questions do not have a right or wrong answer, but rather require that students think about the situation and what they think is the best response to that situation.

A-Z Call Center: Customer Service

Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan

Academic Area	College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Adult Education
Speaking and Listening	<i>CCR.SL.ABE.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</i>
Reading	<i>CCR.RE.ABE.6: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</i>
Career and Technology Standards	<i>CP.ABE.02. Identify interests, skills, and personal preferences that influence career and education choices.</i>

Introducing the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by asking students the following questions:

- What is customer service?
- What are the responsibilities in a customer service job?

Write their ideas on the board. Sample answers should include: help people, answer questions, give information, sell products and take orders, provide technical service, speak to customers, obtain information from customers, solve problems, etc.

Next ask students what types of jobs are customer service jobs. List the jobs on the board or chart paper as they are volunteered. Sample jobs should include positions such as: sales associates in a store, help desk positions, bank tellers, call center operators, rental car associates, and ticket agents.

Share with students that the field of customer service has numerous types of jobs. In the lessons, they will learn about a few of them in this exciting career pathway.

Developing Academic and Career Skills

Before having students read the scenario, take them on a tour of the workbook. Show them the different elements of the lesson. Have students read the title. Have

students predict what they think the story will be about. Next, point out the vocabulary words to the students. Ask students if there are any words that are unfamiliar to them. Share with students that they have a Glossary in the back of their workbook. Have students locate the Glossary. Talk about the way the glossary is set up e.g., the word is bolded and the part of speech is italicized. Show students how each lesson has a scenario or story. Have students look at the way the scenario is written. It is a story about real people. Have students read one of the questions from the **What Do I Think?** section. Share with students that the questions do not have a right or wrong answer.

Have students read the scenario, or you may wish to read the scenario aloud to the class. Provide definitions for words that are unfamiliar to students. As a group, discuss the questions. Focus on the communication skills that Sophia needs in order to be an effective customer service representative at a call center.

Discuss that greeting a customer is an important first step for a customer service representative, whether it is in person or via a phone conversation.

Provide students with the handout **Greeting the Customer**. Tell students that you will be role playing how to greet a customer. Share with students that you want them to listen carefully to each of your greetings and decide if the greeting is appropriate or inappropriate. Tell students that if it is inappropriate, jot down the reason.

Read each of the greetings on the handout **Sample Greetings**. Tell students the number of the greeting and that you will read each greeting twice. Read each greeting with expression. Note that when you are reading a positive greeting, you should smile so that the vocal tone is pleasant.

Debrief the activity by discussing which of the greetings were appropriate and why.

Have students get into pairs or small groups. Have them come up with ideas about what one should remember to do when greeting a customer (i.e., what is appropriate), and what one shouldn't do (i.e., what is inappropriate). After students have had time to brainstorm their ideas, bring the class back together. Have students share their ideas. Encourage students to use the words should and shouldn't and appropriate and inappropriate. Point out that many of the behaviors they have listed are important in greeting the customer, but are also key parts of the customer service attitude.

Students should include the following points.

Appropriate	Inappropriate
Greet the customer politely	Don't stand too close to the customer
Be friendly, courteous, and professional	Don't touch the customer
Greet the customer promptly	Don't be unclear or talk too fast
Introduce yourself	Do not chew gum or eat
Use proper English	Avoid using slang or incorrect English
Make and maintain eye contact	Avoid saying things that are too personal
Smile	Don't scowl

Taking It the Next Step

Tell students that it is never too early to start thinking about career choices. The field of customer service requires excellent communication skills because you are working with people.

Tell students to write down skills that they currently have that they think would be needed for a career in customer service. As a class, talk about the different skills that students have that would be positive traits for a career in customer service. Provide students with the handout **Skills for Customer Service**. Have students identify additional skills that they did not list. Share with students that skills such as being able to speak two languages, enjoying working with people, and the ability to problem solve are important skills in the field of customer service.

Handout: Greeting the Customer

Listen to each of the greetings from a sales associate who is greeting a customer. Is the greeting appropriate or inappropriate? If it is inappropriate, why?

	Appropriate or Inappropriate?	Why?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Handout: Sample Greetings

1. Hey. What do you want now? I'm pretty busy so please hurry up.
(inappropriate)
2. Good morning ma'am. This is Janelle. How can I help you today?
(appropriate)
3. Hi. It's Janelle. Something you need? (inappropriate)
4. Good afternoon, sir. This is Janelle. How can I be of assistance?
(appropriate)
5. Good morning. This is Janelle. How can I help you today?
(appropriate)

Handout: Skills for Customer Service

A career in customer service involves working with people.

Work Skills

- Dealing directly with customers either by telephone, electronically, or face-to-face
- Responding to customer requests
- Resolving customer complaints
- Setting up new customer accounts
- Processing orders and requests
- Keeping records
- Selling products

Personal Skills

To be successful in a career in customer service, you should have exceptional:

- Interpersonal skills
- Speaking and listening skills
- Problem solving skills
- Accuracy and attention to details
- Ability to handle stress
- Patience

Different Paths – Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan

Academic Area	College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Adult Education
Speaking and Listening	<i>CCR.SL.ABE.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</i>
Career and Technology Standards	<i>CP.ABE.02. Identify interests, skills, and personal preferences that influence career and education choices.</i>

Introducing the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by having students think about times when they were not pleased with the customer service that they were receiving. What happened? How would they have handled the situation if they were the employee? Write students' answers on the board. Share with students that a career in customer service requires that sometimes one has to deal with difficult customers. That is why effective communication and problem-solving skills, as well as patience, are such important skills to have.

Developing Academic and Career Skills

Have students read the scenario and as a class answer the questions. You may wish to read the scenario aloud instead of having students read it independently.

Discuss with students that the ability to actively listen and use problem-solving skills when dealing with a difficult situation or customer is essential when working in any area of customer service, whether in a rental center, a call center, or a retail store. Explain that there are two sure things in customer service:

- There will be problems to solve.
- There will be difficult situations and customers to handle.

How an employee listens and speaks to and solves problems for a customer is an important part of the job.

Provide students with the handout **Steps for Dealing with a Difficult Customer**. Ask students to think about the time when they experienced a situation with a

difficult customer or when they were unhappy with the customer service they received. As you read through each step, have students practice the phrases and provide additional phrases to use as appropriate.

Divide the class into pairs. Provide the students with the following real-world scenario:

Carla was helping a customer, Mrs. Santos, finish the paperwork for renting a car. Suddenly, another customer pushes Mrs. Santos away and starts yelling at Carla. "I did not order the car you gave me," he yells. "You gave me a blue-colored car when I asked for one that was black. Why can't you do a good job? Is everyone in this rental company this inept?"

Ask students what they would do if they were Carla. Tell students to role play the situation. Share with students that they should use good communications skills.

Have each pair of students role play the situation for the class. As a class, have students discuss things that were done well and things that could be improved.

Reinforce that effective communication skills is a necessity in customer service, as well as in everyday situations.

Taking It the Next Step

Ask students if they have ever heard about a mystery shopper. Tell students that their task is to observe customer service in the field. Provide students with a copy of the handout **Mystery Shopper**. Tell students that they should go to any retail store and observe a sales associate interact with a customer or act as a customer and talk to the sales associate.

Debrief the activity by having students discuss what they learned about customer service from the experience.

Handout: Steps for Dealing with Difficult Customers

Every employee who works in customer service eventually has to deal with a difficult situation or customer. Use these steps to turn a difficult situation into a good one.

Steps	Sample Ideas and Phrases
1. Listen carefully to what the customer has to say, and let the customer finish.	Make eye contact and listen carefully.
2. Put yourself in the customer's shoes. Repeat back to the customer what you heard to make sure that he/she knows you were listening.	"Did I hear you correctly?" "Is that what you are saying" "I see that you are upset, so let me better understand what you would like to have done."
3. Stay calm	Lower your voice and speak more slowly. Make sure to stay calm.
4. Ask questions in a caring and concerned manner so that you have all of the information.	"I want to make sure that I understand your concern." "I want to make sure that I have all of the information."
5. Apologize without blaming anyone.	"I'm sorry about that." "Let me see what we can do about that."
6. Ask the customer, "What would be an acceptable solution?"	"What would be an acceptable solution?" "Would this be acceptable?"
7. Solve the problem, or find someone who can solve it.	"Let me get this done for you." "Let me get my supervisor so we can get this done for you."

Handout: Mystery Shopper

Directions: Go to any retail store. Observe the sales associate interacting with a customer. You can also act as a customer in the store and talk to the sales associate. Pay attention to how the sales associate greets the customer and what questions he or she asks. Pay attention to the overall “customer service attitude” of the sales associate. Write about your experience.

Store _____ Date _____

How did the sales associate greet the customer?

Did the sales associate smile and make contact?

Did the sales associate speak clearly and in a professional manner?

Describe the sales associate’s “customer service attitude.”

What questions did the sales associate ask?

What did the sales associate do well? What could have been improved?

Would you want to use this sales associate again? Why or why not?

What would do you differently as a sales associate?

So Many Careers – Ivan and Lucas

Academic Area	College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Adult Education
Reading	<i>CCR.RE.ABE.10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently.</i>
Career and Technology Standards	<i>CP.ABE.02. Identify interests, skills, and personal preferences that influence career and education choices.</i>
Career and Technology Standards	<i>TN.ABE.03. Use Internet search engines such as Google, Bing, or Yahoo to collect data and information.</i>

Introducing the Lesson

Ask students if they ever needed to find information quickly. However, there was so much to read they just couldn't locate what they were looking for in the text. Have students share their experiences.

Write the following word on the board: *scanning*.

Ask students to define the term in their own words. Ask if they ever use the strategy of scanning when they read. Why?

Share with students that the ability to quickly find information is an important skill in the workplace, especially when a customer is waiting for an answer. Tell students that in today's lesson, they will practice scanning for information.

Developing Academic and Career Skills

Divide the class into small groups and have them read the scenario and answer the questions. Have each group share their answers with the class. Focus on Ivan's need to quickly find information for a customer and why it was important to do so.

Tell students that an essential reading skill is scanning for specific information. Scanning is also a critical test-taking skill, as well as a necessary skill in daily life and in the workplace.

Tell students that today, they will be participating in a "find the word" race. With the scenario in front of them, say a word that occurs only once in the scenario. When students find the word, have them stand up.

Sample Words: dreamed, entry-level, franchise (occurs once in the text and once in Vocabulary)

Ask students how they located the word. Did they start at the beginning of the text or did they use a different strategy?

Tell students that a good first step in scanning is to learn about how the material is arranged. Share with students that materials a person may scan is typically arranged in the following ways:

Arrangement of Text	Examples
Alphabetical (A-Z order)	Dictionary, index
Non-alphabetical	Television listing
Chronological (time or numerical order)	Directions
Categorical	Items in an auto parts catalog, work manuals
Textual	Encyclopedia entry,

You may wish to have students find examples of the different types of texts that are available in the classroom.

Have students practice their scanning skills by locating words and information from different types of texts. Ensure that students have experience scanning complex materials as used in the workplace. Tell students that the more they practice scanning for information, the more successful they will be in quickly accessing the information they need.

Taking It the Next Step

CareerOneStop provides free videos on different types of careers, as well as workplace skills and abilities. Note that many of the career videos are also provided in Spanish.

Have students identify one career pathway in the customer service industry in which they are interested. Have students watch a video on that career from **CareerOneStop**:

<http://www.careeronestop.org/Videos/default.aspx>

After watching the video, you may wish to have students further explore the career by doing an Internet search or by showing students how to do a career search on the **CareerOneStop** at:

<http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>

Debrief the activity by having students share three things that they learned about their selected career.

Students may also be interested in meeting with a career counselor and taking an interest inventory. Florida provides the **Kuder® Career Planning Inventory**.

The O*NET Resource Center also provides a free interest inventory at:

<http://www.onetcenter.org/IP.html>

Glossary

Automotive supply store: *noun* – is also referred to as an auto parts store, this type of store provides different parts for automotive repair.

Call Center: *noun* – an office set up to handle a large volume of telephone calls, especially for taking orders and providing customer service.

Career: *noun* – a profession that usually requires training.

Career inventory: *noun* – questions that help a person decide on a career and shows a person's likes, dislikes, and skills. Also called an interest inventory.

Complaints: *noun* – a statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

Computer reservation system: *noun* – a computer program that shows which vehicles are available and which have been reserved or rented.

Computerized inventory system: *noun* – a computer program that lists the items and number of items that a store has in stock.

Customer service: *noun* – the assistance and advice provided by a company to those people who buy or use its products or services.

Difficult customer: *noun* – a customer who is hard to deal with or who is unreasonable or angry.

Entry-level: *adjective* – a beginning job that often requires little or no experience.

Franchise: *noun* – a license that allows a person the right to use a company's name, products, and business system.

Index: *noun* – an alphabetical list of products with references to the places where they are found.

Manager: *noun* – someone who is in charge of a business or a department.

Manuals: *noun* – a book of instructions.

On-the-job: *adjective* – training that takes place at work while an employee is being paid.

Operating: *verb* – performing a task.

Opportunities: *noun* – chances to do something.

Patience: *noun* – the ability to stay calm and wait without becoming annoyed.

Script: *noun* – something written.

Supervisor: *noun* – a person who monitors employees in their tasks.