

Identifying and Clarifying Problems

Activity Type

Vocabulary and Writing Exercises: gap-fill, categorising, matching, binary choice, writing sentences

Speaking Activities: asking and answering questions, making and responding to statements, freer practice (pair work)

Focus

Dealing with problems

Aim

To practice common phrases for identifying and clarifying problems.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Upper-intermediate (B2)

Time

30 minutes

Introduction

In this dealing with problems worksheet, students practice common phrases for identifying and clarifying everyday problems.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

First, students discuss two questions about everyday problems in pairs.

Students then complete phrases that identify and clarify problems with words from a box and then indicate the function of each phrase.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. understand, CP | 6. mean, CP |
| 2. main, IP | 7. wrong, IP |
| 3. what, CP | 8. clarify, CP |
| 4. explain, CP | 9. facing, IP |
| 5. address, IP | 10. issue, IP |

Next, students match sentence halves to create statements related to identifying and clarifying problems.

Exercise C - Answer key

1. e 2. i 3. h 4. a 5. f 6. b 7. d 8. g 9. j 10. c

After that, students underline the correct words to complete sentences and then match each statement identifying a problem to its corresponding clarification.

Exercise D - Answer key

Identifying problems	Clarifying problems
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- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. there's, d | a. clarify |
| 2. concern, e | b. mean |
| 3. address, b | c. saying |
| 4. wrong, a | d. understand |
| 5. facing, c | e. explain |

Students then use the language from the worksheet to write sentences identifying topic-related problems, e.g. for the topic 'home', students could write *'The challenge I need to address is finding an apartment that is affordable but not too far from work.'*

Finally, students take turns reading each sentence to a partner, who clarifies the issue, e.g. *'So, what you're saying is that there aren't many affordable places near your office.'*

Identifying and Clarifying Problems

A. In pairs, ask and answer the questions about everyday problems.

1. What are some everyday problems that you encounter? Which are the most annoying?
2. What are some key steps for dealing with everyday problems?

B. Complete each phrase with a word from the box and then write whether the phrase is used to 'identify problems' or 'clarify problems'.

clarify	explain	main	issue	facing
wrong	understand	address	what	mean

1. Let me make sure I
2. The concern is... ..
3. So, you're saying is that... ..
4. Could you the issue again?
5. The challenge we need to is... ..
6. Do you that...?
7. It seems like something is with... ..
8. Just to, the problem is... ..
9. We seem to be a problem with... ..
10. It appears there's an regarding... ..

C. Match the sentence halves to create statements related to identifying and clarifying problems.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The main concern is the | a. a problem with our loan application. |
| 2. I apologise, but could | b. we need to come back for another appointment? |
| 3. It appears there's an issue | c. address is the lack of new members at the club. |
| 4. We seem to be facing | d. wrong with the engine. |
| 5. Just to clarify, the problem is | e. leak in the roof, as we're expecting rain next week. |
| 6. Do you mean that | f. that we have been bumped off our connecting flight. |
| 7. It seems like something is | g. I understand, the problem is Bobby's behaviour. |
| 8. Let me make sure | h. regarding the venue, as it's no longer available. |
| 9. So, what you're saying | i. you explain the issue again? |
| 10. The challenge we need to | j. is that you'd like to move out. |

Identifying and Clarifying Problems

D. Underline the correct words to complete the sentences identifying and clarifying problems and then match each sentence identifying a problem to its corresponding clarification.

Identifying problems

1. It appears *it's* / *there's* an issue regarding the WiFi signal in my room.
2. My main *concern* / *anxiety* is the lack of communication between the two of us.
3. The challenge we need to *address* / *deal* is engaging students in the classroom.
4. It seems like something is *incorrect* / *wrong* with the car.
5. We seem to be *addressing* / *facing* a problem with the air conditioning unit.

Clarifying problems

- a. Just to *clarify* / *resolve*, the problem is that it doesn't start.
- b. So, what you're *meaning* / *saying* is that classes need to be more interesting.
- c. Do you *imply* / *mean* that it isn't cooling the entire room?
- d. Let me make sure I *understand* / *realise*, you can't connect your devices to the Internet.
- e. Could you *illustrate* / *explain* the issue again? I thought we spoke every day.



E. For each topic, write a sentence identifying a related problem using the language from the worksheet.

1. Relationships

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2. Home

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3. Health

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4. Finances

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5. Work

.....

6. Transport

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F. Now, take turns reading each problem to a partner, who uses the language from the worksheet to clarify the issue.