

## Real Talk #008 – Getting a refund

### Episode description

Shopping can be a lot of fun, especially when you're on vacation. However, sometimes you make a purchase that doesn't work out. Getting a refund can be a tricky process, especially in your second language. In today's episode, Andrew and Morag explain all the essential expressions and phrases you need to successfully return an item for a refund!

### Fun fact

Montreal, Canada, is home to the world-famous Underground City, which is a series of tunnels that link together shopping malls, office buildings, residential buildings, convention halls, universities, and entertainment venues. The Underground City is made up of more than 32 km of tunnels and sees more than 500,000 people pass through it every winter day!

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- To return/to take back
- Can I see your receipt?
- Can I ask why you want to return them?
- They don't fit very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.
- Did you want to exchange them?
- I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?



## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And I'm Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

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Andrew: Today we're going to do a Real Talk episode. Real Talk is the series where we take a close look at expressions that are very important for everyday, real-life situations in an English-speaking country.

Morag: That's right. So in this episode, we are going to learn how to ask for a refund at a clothing store.

Andrew: Sometimes you need to do this. Maybe a piece of clothing you purchased just doesn't fit right, and you want to take it back. Or it's defective. The zipper is broken or a button is loose.

Morag: At some point or another, everybody has encountered this situation. OK, so today we are going to listen to a dialogue between a customer and a clothing store employee. The customer bought some clothes from the store last week but isn't happy with them anymore, and is going to try to get a refund from the store today.

Andrew: So let's listen to the dialogue and, after it's finished, we'll take a close look at the vocabulary and expressions the customer and store employee use in this refund situation. Here's the dialogue:

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Store employee: How can I help you today?

Customer: Um, yeah. So I bought these shirts here last week but I'm not happy with them, and I'd like **to return** them, please.

Store employee: OK. No problem. Let's see what I can do. **Can I see your receipt?**

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Customer: Sure. Here you are.

Store employee: So the shirts look fine. **Can I ask why you want to return them?**

Customer: Well, **they don't fit me very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.**

Store employee: OK. **Did you just want to exchange them** for a different size?

Customer: No, I'll just take the refund, if that's OK. Um, all the tags are still on the shirts. I didn't wear them at all.

Store employee: OK, yeah. No problem. I believe you. **I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?**

Customer: Yeah, yeah. It's right here.

Store employee: So the refund amount comes to \$79.24.

Customer: OK, great. Thanks.

Store employee: And here's your receipt. Have a great day.

Customer: Thanks. You too.

Andrew: In the dialogue, we heard a customer **return** some shirts to a clothing store. She wasn't happy with the shirts because they didn't fit well.

You'll get another chance to listen to this dialogue at the end of the episode, but for now we'll take a close look at the dialogue and examine the key expressions one by one.

The first key expression that we hear the customer say is, "I'm not happy with the shirts and I'd like **to return** them, please." This is just a very nice and polite way to express your dissatisfaction with a product, and communicate to the retail establishment where you bought the item that you would like a refund.

Morag: I agree. It's a polite way of saying, "I want a refund."

Andrew: Yeah, so **to return** means to exchange the product back to the store for a refund.

Morag: Mhmm. Although sometimes you will be able **to return** something, but only receive store credit.

Andrew: That is true. And we'll get to that point in just a second.

Morag: Ooo, sorry. Jumpin' the gun.

Andrew: No, that's OK. OK, our second key expression today is, "**Can I see your receipt?**" Hmm, this is a fun one to say because it comes out sounding very interesting when you say it out loud. **Can I see your receipt?**

Morag: Ooo, yeah. **Can I see your receipt?**

Andrew: What is a receipt, Morag?

Morag: A receipt is the paper record of the purchase that you made. So they're what you get in the bag along with the purchase. And they're needed to verify that you purchased something, and usually you can't get a refund or **return** something without a valid receipt.

Andrew: Yeah. So any time you're shopping, it's a good idea to hang on to your receipt, just in case you need to take something back in the future for an exchange or refund.

And so in our dialogue, we heard the store employee asking for the receipt so he could verify that the customer did in fact purchase the shirts.

All right, let's keep going here. What is our third key expression today, Morag?

Morag: Our third expression is, "**Can I ask why you want to return them?**" And that is the store employee asking for a reason that the customer wants a refund, wants **to return** the items. Usually, any store employee will need to write down a reason on a return slip or something. So they'll almost always ask what the reason is for the return.

Andrew: Exactly. So if you are taking an item back to the store for return or exchange, it's a good idea to prepare in advance how to explain to the store that you need the refund or exchange.

And in the dialogue we heard, a customer took the shirts back because **they didn't fit very well, and they were a little too baggy for her tastes**. So maybe she tried them on in the store and thought, "Hmm, OK. They're not bad," but then later on she changed her mind and wanted **to return** them.

So it's a good idea to prepare an answer for this question. But I can think of other questions that you might be asked that are essentially the same.

- Andrew: And Morag, I think it's a good idea to turn this into a quiz. Let's give the listeners 30 seconds, and we want you guys to brainstorm, to think of alternative ways that you could be asked this question, "**Can I ask why you want to return them?**" So here you go, 30 seconds. Brainstorm now.
- Morag, did you come up with any alternative ways this question could be asked?
- Morag: Yeah. I think I ... I think I killed the quiz, Andrew.
- Andrew: You nailed it?
- Morag: I nailed it.
- Andrew: OK. Whaddya got?
- Morag: I thought of, "Why would you like **to return** them?"
- Andrew: Hmm, "Why would you like **to return** them?"
- Morag: Yeah, "Why would you like **to return** them?" Or "this" or "that" or any of those. You definitely are likely to hear the question phrased like this at some point.
- Andrew: Yes, it is very direct. It's to the point and you are very likely to hear this question, definitely.
- Morag: Now, Andrew, did you think of anything?
- Andrew: You betcha, I did. I thought of the question, "What's the matter with them?"
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: So, "What's the matter with the shirts?" "What's the matter with the shoes you're trying **to return**?" "What's the matter with these pants?" A question like this, "What's the matter?" means, "What's the problem?"
- Morag: Yeah, "What's the issue?" "Why are they not good?"
- Andrew: Right. Because usually if a store is going to issue you a refund, there has to be a problem, right? Otherwise, maybe they don't want that secondhand merchandise to come back to them. They always wanna try and keep the sale, right? So, yeah, they want to know if there's an issue before they give a refund.
- Morag: Although I do love stores that have totally open refund policies.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: My favourite makeup store is like that. They will **take back** anything, for any reason. It's great.

Andrew: That is good customer service.

Morag: Mmhmm. But not everywhere has that good customer service. So, like Andrew says, it's good to prepare a reason why you want **to return** something, or prepare what is the matter with the item you want **to return**.

Andrew: Definitely. OK, let's keep going through this dialogue. And this transitions nicely into our next item to talk about. And that is how the customer answers this question.

So a store employee asks, "**Can I ask why you want to return them?**" And the customer says, "**Well, they don't fit very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.**"

So, really, the customer is just unhappy with the quality of the clothes, the way the clothes fit.

Morag: Yeah, usually it's because something is wrong with the fit. It can be too baggy, like in this example. Or maybe too tight or too big. And in the learning materials for this episode, we will go over more ways and more vocabulary to talk about clothing that isn't quite right for you, or just doesn't quite fit.

Andrew: Very cool. So definitely check out the learning materials for this episode. They will be very helpful.

All right. Continuing on, our next expression is, "**Did you want to exchange them** for a different size?" The store employee asks the customer, "**Did you want to exchange them**, the shirts, for a different size?" Because the shirts are a little too baggy. They don't fit very well. And, in my experience, usually a store, they're a little hesitant to give a refund. If they can do an exchange, it's better for them. They get to keep your money.

So it is likely that you will hear an employee try to get you to do an exchange before they give a refund.

Morag: That's definitely true, Andrew.

Andrew: So the employee asks, "**Did you want to exchange them?**" And the customer replies, "No thanks, just the refund. I'll take the refund." She wants her money back.

Morag: And that leads us into the next key expression, where once the customer says that she just wants **to return** the items, she says that, “All the tags are on the shirts.” “All the tags are on the shirts.” By this, she means that the price tags and the sizing tags, or any other pieces of paper or plastic that were on the item of clothing when she purchased them, are still on.

Morag: She says this because most clothing stores require that you have all of the tags on the clothing to be able **to return** it.

Andrew: That’s right. This is one of the ways they can verify that you haven’t worn the item before trying **to return** it. Because ... Well, these days, it seems like when you buy a new piece of clothing, there are hundreds of tags and stickers and extra buttons attached. And so if all of this is missing, it’s a little suspicious. Maybe perhaps you’ve worn this item.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: So the customer here is just assuring the store that she hasn’t worn the shirts, and all of the tags—the price tags, the size tags—are still attached to the shirts.

Our final key expression for today is about the refund itself. And the store employee tells the customer that a refund needs to be issued back to the credit card that the purchase was made with. So the full expression is, “**I’ll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card with you?**”

And so this happens all the time. When you make a purchase with a credit card or a debit card, and then you take that purchase back for a refund, well, the refund needs to be issued with the same card. So it is very, very likely that you will hear this question. So make sure that you bring the same card you made the purchase with with you when you are trying to get a refund.

Morag: Be prepared for this question, because you will hear it in some way or another. And we will talk more about those different phrasings in the learning materials.

Andrew: Yeah. And it’s a complicated situation, taking an item back for a refund. And I do think that it’s difficult for someone to do this in English when it’s not their native language.

So I think today’s learning materials are going to be really, really educational and useful for everyone. So again, just check ’em out. They will help you in your quest to take things back to the store.

Well, everybody, that’s all for us today.

- Morag: Do not forget that we will be replaying the dialogue one more time at the very end of this episode.
- Andrew: And if you enjoyed this Real Talk episode, please support us and tell all your friends to listen to Culips.
- Morag: And if you have any questions or comments for us, you can always send a message through our Facebook page, at [facebook.com/culipspodcast](https://facebook.com/culipspodcast), or through our website, [Culips.com](http://Culips.com).
- Andrew: We'll be back soon with another new episode.
- Morag: Bye.
- Andrew: Bye.

- Store employee: How can I help you today?
- Customer: Um, yeah. So I bought these shirts here last week but I'm not happy with them, and I'd like **to return** them, please.
- Store employee: OK. No problem. Let's see what I can do. **Can I see your receipt?**
- Customer: Sure. Here you are.
- Store employee: So the shirts look fine. **Can I ask why you want to return them?**
- Customer: Well, **they don't fit me very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.**
- Store employee: OK. **Did you just want to exchange them** for a different size?
- Customer: No, I'll just take the refund, if that's OK. Um, all the tags are still on the shirts. I didn't wear them at all.
- Store employee: OK, yeah. No problem. I believe you. **I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?**
- Customer: Yeah, yeah. It's right here.
- Store employee: So the refund amount comes to \$79.24.
- Customer: OK, great. Thanks.
- Store employee: And here's your receipt. Have a great day.
- Customer: Thanks. You too.



## Detailed Explanations

### To return/to take back

The first expression we looked at in this episode was “I’m not happy with the shirts and would like **to return** them, please.” The key part of this sentence is **to return**. Saying, “I would like **to return** this” or “I want **to return** this” is the simplest way to express that you want to give the item back. You should always use a phrase with **to return** when you approach an employee of a store to give back an item.

**To take back** is another way you will often hear people talk about **returning** things. **To take back** is a phrasal verb that has multiple meanings, but in this context means **to return** something to a store for a refund or exchange. However, unlike **to return**, you shouldn’t use **to take back** when asking to give something back. **To take back** is only used when talking about **returning** something in the future or the possibility of **returning** something. For example, if your friend just bought a shirt they don’t like, you might say, “You could **take it back**,” as a way of suggesting they **return** the item.

So, **to return** and **to take back** have the same meaning—to bring an item back to the store it was purchased from for a refund or exchange—but **to take back** is only used when discussing a future return.

Here are a couple more examples with **to return/to take back**:

Employee: Hi, how can I help you?

Jamal: I bought this shirt here last week and I want **to return** it, please.

Kate: What do you think of this dress?

George: It’s all right. I don’t think it fits you properly, though.

Kate: I know, I know. You’re right. It’s too tight in the shoulders and too loose in the waist. I just love the colour so much! Do you think I should keep it or **take it back**?

George: I think you should **take back** the dress. Clothing that doesn’t fit is no good!

## Can I see your receipt?

***Can I see your receipt?*** is a question that you will likely hear when returning an item to a store. The employee of the store needs the receipt to make sure that you really bought the item from them, and often needs to keep it after the return is finished. A receipt is the paper you're given when you buy something, and it shows all the information about your purchase. By asking, "***Can I see your receipt?***" the employee is requesting that you give them the receipt you received when you purchased the item.

Here are a couple other ways you might hear this request phrased:

- Do you have your receipt?
- I'll need the receipt.
- I have to have your original receipt.
- Can I get the receipt?

No matter how it's phrased, you will almost always be asked to show your receipt when returning an item. So, make sure you save your receipts!

Here are a couple more examples with this kind of request:

*Shana is trying to return a purse she bought a few days ago. After Shana asks to return the purse, the store employee says:*

Employee: **Can I get the receipt** for the purse?

Shana: I have it right here.

Employee: Thanks. This should only take another minute.

*Paulo doesn't like a pair of shoes he bought last week. After Paulo tells the store employee that he wants to return the shoes, the employee asks:*

Employee: **Can I see your receipt?**

Paulo: Oh, I threw it away.

Employee: I'm sorry, but I can't return the shoes without the original receipt. It's company policy.

## Can I ask why you want to return them?

When you go to return an item, the store employee will often ask you for the reason you want to return it. Many larger stores have policies that require the employee making the return to include this information.

There are a few different ways you might hear this question, such as:

- What made you want to return the [item]?
- What is the reason for the return?
- Why didn't the [item] work out for you?
- Why are you looking to return these?
- Is there something wrong with the [item]?

**"Can I ask why you want to return them?"** is a common question to hear when making a return. So, it's a good idea to prepare a reason why you are returning an item before you go into the store.

Here are a couple more examples with this kind of question:

*Jonah bought a pair of pants last week. After wearing them once, he realized that they are too tight. So, Jonah went back to the store and asked to return them.*

Employee: **Can I ask why you want to return these pants?**

Jonah: There's nothing wrong with them, I just bought the wrong size by mistake.

*Siobhan was sad to discover that her new shirt started falling apart the first time she wore it. She is now back at the store and has just asked to return the shirt.*

Employee: **Why didn't this shirt work out for you?**

Siobhan: It started to tear at the seams after the first time I wore it! I don't want to exchange it for a new one, I just want my money back.

**They don't fit very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.**

In this episode's dialogue example, the customer's reason for wanting to return the shirts was that, "***They don't fit very well. They're a little too baggy for my taste.***" However, there are many reasons you might want to return an item of clothing.

So, to help you prepare your answer to, "Can I ask why you want to return them?" here are some of the common reasons you might want to return an item of clothing if it doesn't fit properly. The item might be: too tight, too big, too small, too loose, too short, or too long.

Sometimes you want to return an item for a reason other than how it fits. If something is wrong with the item, you just need to say what the problem is. For example, you might return something because:

- The zipper is broken.
- It's missing a button.
- The stitching is coming undone.
- The item is badly made.
- There is a mark or a stain on it.

Here are a couple more examples with this kind of reason:

*Henry received a couple of sweaters as a gift. He doesn't like the way they fit, so he is trying to return them to the store.*

Employee: Why do you want to return these?

Henry: **They don't fit me properly.** Both of the sweaters are too tight. I find them uncomfortable.

*Juliette bought a new jacket, but when she brought it home she discovered that it has a stain on it. So, she has brought it back to the store and is looking to exchange the jacket for a new one.*

Employee: Can I ask why you want to return this jacket?

Juliette: **It has a stain on it.**

## Did you want to exchange them?

You usually have two options when returning an item: a refund or an exchange. If you get a refund, you get your money back. If you exchange the item, you give back the one you originally bought and take a different item instead. Here are a few ways you could be asked about exchanging an item:

- Are you looking to make an exchange or to get a refund?
- Would you like to exchange it for a different [item]?
- If it doesn't fit well, we can exchange it for a different size.
- Would you like to get a different [item] instead?
- Can I get you a different [item] in exchange?

Because it's better for stores to exchange items rather than refund them, you will often be asked, "***Did you want to exchange them?***" after you ask to return something.

At some stores, they don't do refunds but will exchange items for store credit. In other words, they will take back the item and put its value towards a different purchase at that same store. If you're not sure about a purchase, it's a good idea to ask about the store's return policy before you buy!

Here are a couple more examples with ***did you want to exchange them?***

*Rita regrets buying a coat last week and so is trying to return it.*

Rita: Excuse me, I'd like to return this coat.

Employee: **Would you like to exchange it for another coat?**

Rita: No thanks, I'd just like a refund.

*Jim accidentally bought a t-shirt in the wrong size. He wants to exchange it for one that fits.*

Jim: I want to return this t-shirt. It doesn't fit me.

Employee: **Would you like to exchange it for a different size?**

Jim: Yes, that would be great.

**I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?**

At most stores, they can only issue a refund to the same card that you purchased the item with initially. So, at the end of the return process, you're likely to hear some variation of ***I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?*** Here are a few other ways you might hear this phrased:

- I have to refund it to the original card you used.
- I'll need to get the card you used to make the purchase.
- Do you have the [credit/debit] card you bought this with? I can only make the refund to that card.
- We can only refund to the card you purchased the [item] with.

There are many ways this might be phrased, but the key parts of this request are the references to a card and to the original purchase of the item you're returning. So, remember to bring the same card with you when you're returning an item!

Here are a couple more examples with ***I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?***

*Johan is returning a pair of shoes that are too tight.*

Employee: All right, we're almost done. **I'll need to issue the refund back to the credit card that you made the purchase with. Do you have that card on you?**

Johan: Yes, I have it right here.

*Una accidentally bought a skirt that is the wrong size. She is back at the store trying to return it.*

Employee: OK, in order to process the refund **I'll need to get the card you used to make the purchase.**

Una: Oh, I don't have it with me.

Employee: I'm sorry, but you'll have to come back with the original card. I can't give you a refund without it.

## Quiz

1. **If you want to return a few items and get your money back, how should you answer the question, “Do you want to exchange them?”**
  - a) "Yes."
  - b) "No."
  
2. **If you respond with, “They don’t fit very well. They’re a little too baggy for my taste,” which of the following questions were you just asked?**
  - a) “Do you want to exchange them?”
  - b) “Can I ask why you want to return them?”
  - c) “Can I see your receipt?”
  - d) “Do you have the card you used to purchase this item?”
  
3. **If you regret purchasing a piece of clothing, you might plan to \_\_\_\_\_ to the store.**
  - a) take it down
  - b) talk it down
  - c) take it back
  - d) toss it back
  
4. **When returning an item, you usually need to prove that you purchased the item at the store you’re returning it to. To get this proof, the store employee will ask:**
  - a) “Can I see your receipt?”
  - b) “Are the tags still on?”
  - c) “Do you have the card you used to purchase the item?”
  - d) “Can you remember when you purchased the item?”
  
5. **Which of the following is an appropriate response to the question “Can I ask why you want to return them?”**
  - a) “They don’t fit properly.”
  - b) “They’re too loose.”
  - c) “The stitching is coming undone.”
  - d) all of the above

## Quiz Answers

1.b 2.b 3.c 4.a 5.d

### Episode credits

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