Real Talk #016 – Calling tech support

Episode description

When you can't get a computer or device to work it can be a real emergency! If you're stuck trying to solve a tech problem, you might have to call tech support. This can be a difficult task, even in your native language. But don't worry, because in this Real Talk episode Andrew and Morag explain the key vocabulary and expressions you need to know to get the tech help you need in English!

Fun fact

Did you know that tech support agents use Google to help their customers during more than half of their calls? So, if you are good at using Google to research your problems, you might be able to avoid calling tech support!

Expressions included in the learning materials

➢ To troubleshoot/troubleshooting

➢ How may I assist you?

➢ To sync

➢ To boot/reboot

➢ Asking for clarification

➢ Tech verbs

Transcript

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.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. I'm Andrew.

Morag: And I'm Morag.

Andrew: And you are listening to Culips.

Hey, guys. Welcome back to another Real Talk episode. Real Talk is the series where we take a close look at expressions that are very important for everyday life in an English-speaking country.

Morag: In this episode, we're going to learn how to call a customer service number for tech support.

Andrew: Tech support, ugh. Technical support, right?

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: So when you have a problem with your phone or your computer or another electronic device, you can call the manufacturer's customer service centre and they'll help you try to fix your problem.

Morag: They'll try to help, definitely, yeah.

Andrew: Yes.

Morag: But doing this at all can be a bit difficult, and doing this in English could be a real challenge.

Andrew: Yeah. I know in my experience, it can be really difficult to understand the person on the other end of the phone line. So today we're going to take a look at how to call a customer service centre, and we're going to help prepare you to make a tech support call that maybe you'll have to make in the future.

Morag: OK, so let's outline the plan for this episode. We will start by listening to a call between a customer and customer service representative, who is working at a call centre. Then we'll go on and take a close look at the conversation and examine all the key expressions you need to know.

Andrew: That sounds perfect. OK, we'll take a listen to that call right after this message.

Announcer:	Do you like listening to Culips? If so, please show your support by leaving Culips a five-star rating and a review on iTunes or Stitcher. This helps new listeners find the show. So don't delay, rate and review today.
CS Rep:	Thanks for calling Fast Tech Electronics. My name is Ricky. **How may I assist you?**
Customer:	Hey. Um, I recently bought a pair of your Bluetooth headphones and I can't get them to **sync** to my phone. I think they're broken.
CS Rep:	Sure, ma'am, I can help you with that. But before anything else, can I have your name so I can address you properly?
Customer:	My name is Andrea Gustafsson.
CS Rep:	OK, thank you Mrs. Gustafsson. So your headphones aren't working. Can I get the model number of your headphones and of your phone, too?
Customer:	I'm using an iPhone 7 and the headphone model number is XL909.
CS Rep:	Have you tried pairing the headphones and the phone?
Customer:	Pairing? I don't understand what that is.
CS Rep:	Ah, OK. Pairing is just connecting the headphones and the phone together. I can help you pair your phone and headphones, but first I just need you to **reboot** your phone.
Customer:	How do I do that?
CS Rep:	OK, just turn it off and then turn it on again.
Customer:	OK. OK, OK, done.
CS Rep:	OK. Now you need to prepare the headphones to pair to the phone. All you need to do is press the button on the left side of the headphones and hold it down for 5 seconds.
Customer:	OK. All right, I've done that.
CS Rep:	Now I want you to launch the settings app on your phone.
Customer:	Sorry, I didn't hear you. What did you say?

CS Rep:	Please launch the settings app by tapping on the settings icon.
Customer:	OK. OK, yup, done.
CS Rep:	Now tap the Bluetooth option.
Customer:	OK.
CS Rep:	And finally, select Excel 909.
Customer:	OK! Yeah, done.
CS Rep:	Awesome. Your phone and headphones are now paired, and you can use your headphones to listen to music right from your phone.
Customer:	Excellent. Thank you so much for your help.
CS Rep:	Is there anything else I can help you with today?
Customer:	No thanks. Have a good day.
CS Rep:	Take care. Bye.

Andrew: We just heard a conversation between a customer who was having problems with her Bluetooth headphones and a customer service representative. And the customer service representative helped the customer **troubleshoot** her problem.

Morag: That's right. And **troubleshoot** means to try and solve a technical or computer-related problem. So the customer service representative helped the customer **to troubleshoot** the problem, and was able to successfully help fix the problem that the customer had.

Andrew: Morag, did you know that for a short time I worked at a call centre as a customer service representative in the tech industry?

Morag: Oh. I can't imagine that that would be a lot of fun.

Andrew: There was a lot of **troubleshooting**, a lot of **troubleshooting**.

Morag: Yeah, with probably some anxiety on the line, yeah.

Andrew: Yeah. Let's just say I didn't keep that job for very long. But the good news is I know exactly what to say on a tech service call, so I can really help everybody with this situation.

Morag: That's fantastic. All right!

Andrew: So now let's take a look at four key areas of the call we just heard and examine them in more detail.

            The first area is stating the problem, OK? How can you tell the customer service representative that you're talking to about your problem?

Morag: This is a very important part.

Andrew: Yeah, this is very important 'cause you have to clearly describe the issue so that you can receive the proper help, right?

Morag: Absolutely.

Andrew: So, Morag, what does the customer say in the call we heard when stating the problem?

Morag: She stated the problem by saying that she recently bought a pair of Bluetooth headphones, but she can't get them to **sync** to her phone.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: Which kind of defeats the whole point of Bluetooth headphones.

Andrew: Right, because Bluetooth headphones are wireless. You need to get the headphone and the phone to **sync** together. And **sync** here is short for the word synchronize. And what does this mean, synchronize? Can you explain it to us, Morag?

Morag: It means to link or connect.

Andrew: You can **sync** your Bluetooth headphones with your cell phone. We also use verb **sync** a lot to talk about transferring files between your computer and your phone, so you can **sync** music to your phone or **sync** videos to your phone. We use it a lot like this.

Morag: I was thinking about **syncing** music to my iPod, but then I realized that I don't know if people use those anymore.

Andrew: They're pretty old school these days. You're right.

Morag: Yeah, yeah. So when you call a tech support line, the main thing is you need to be able to really clearly state your problem. Be specific about what's wrong.

Andrew: Yeah, I definitely agree with you, Morag. So what I'd like to do right now is just quickly run through a list of very common tech problems that people have. These are some expressions that you might need to use when you call tech support. And the first one is, "My computer or my phone is frozen."

Morag: Hmm, I've had to call tech support for just that reason.

Andrew: So when your computer or your phone is frozen, nothing moves. You move the mouse, you click on the icons and nothing happens. Ah, it's scary.

Morag: It is. The last time I had that, it was frozen … Updating.

Andrew: Ah!

Morag: It was just on the same updating screen for like 2 hours. So it was frozen on that screen, yeah.

Andrew: I think I'd have a heart attack if that happened.

Morag: I know, yeah, yeah.

Andrew: What else is there? Let's see. Well, you could have a virus on your computer, so you might have to tell tech support that, "My computer has a virus."

Morag: Another one that I've definitely had before is that your internet isn't working. You usually say that with, "My internet is down."

Andrew: Yeah, "My internet is down" means the service is down. The service is not working right now.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Another one that causes me a heart attack is when my internet is down.

Morag: Yes! Oh, you really quickly realize how much you use it for, every day.

Andrew: This next one, actually, I called tech support about this recently. The problem was that the computer I was using wasn't recognizing my USB key.

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: I had to tell tech support, "Hey, help me. My computer won't recognize my USB device." This was actually at a conference.

Morag: Oh no!

Andrew: I was scheduled to make a presentation and I couldn't load my presentation, so I needed to get some help from tech support.

Morag: That's always when that kind of stuff happens, unfortunately.

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: And another example, which probably also happened at a similarly bad time, it has for me, is if your computer won't print for some reason. I've had to call somebody because I had a paper due, and I had to print out my paper to go hand it in and my printer wouldn't print.

Andrew: Right, so you can tell tech support, "My printer won't print."

Morag: It sounds a little silly but it's a real problem.

Andrew: It's a real problem, can be a big problem, yeah.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: The last one that I wanted to briefly mention here is, "I can't log in." So maybe you are trying to log in to your computer or log in to a website, forget your password, or it's just not working for some reason. You can tell tech support, "I can't log in."

Morag: I think we've covered most of the common problems that you might need help with.

Andrew: I agree. So let's continue on with our examination of the conversation we heard earlier. And now we're gonna look at a different area of the conversation, where the customer service representative **confirms the basics** with the customer, OK?

            Let's hear how the customer service representative does that. Let's listen to that part of the conversation one more time.

CS Rep: I can help you pair your phone and headphones, but first I just need you to **reboot** your phone.

Customer: How do I do that?

CS Rep: OK, just turn it off and then turn it on again.

Customer: OK.

Morag:	The customer service representative will usually ask you to do some basic things that will help solve the problem that you're having most of the time.
Andrew:	Yeah. So what we just heard in this episode was that he asked the customer to **reboot** her phone, right? He said, "First I just need you to **reboot** your phone." And **reboot** of course, r-e-b-o-o-t, **reboot** is just another word for restart or turning off and then turning on again.
Morag:	Which is the most basic thing you're going to be asked. Turn it off and on again.
Andrew:	Yeah. So when you call tech support, they can solve almost all of the problems quickly by just **confirming some of the basic** ways of operating an electronic device with you, just to make sure everything is set up correctly, right? So …
Morag:	Yeah.
Andrew:	Like, can you restart your phone? Maybe that'll fix the problem.
Morag:	It usually does, yeah.
Andrew:	They might also ask you, "Is the battery charged?"
Morag:	Or sometimes, "Is it turned on?" But my printer won't print. You might be asked the question, "Well, is your printer on?"
Andrew:	Mmhmm. Or, "Is it plugged into the wall?"
Morag:	Mmhmm. Another one you might hear, "Are you connected to the internet?"
Andrew:	Hmm, "Are you connected to the internet?" Right.
Morag:	Because you're having trouble logging in to something, so it'd be like, "Are you sure that you're connected?" Yeah.
Andrew:	Yeah. "My Google won't load, what's up?"
Morag:	Yeah.
Andrew:	Well, "Is your WiFi card turned on?" You know, something like this.
Morag:	Oh yeah.
Andrew:	Or maybe, "Is your caps lock on?" Some people will try to type the password in with caps lock on and it won't work, and that's a possible reason why. So when you call tech support, be prepared to confirm these

basic things with the tech support agent. You're very likely to be asked these basic questions.

OK, let's continue on. And as we mentioned at the top of the show, it can be really difficult to understand someone when you're talking on the phone, right? The connection might be bad or you might be unfamiliar with the accent of the customer service representative

Morag: I know that when I'm speaking in French on the phone, which is my second language, it can be so much harder than talking to someone in person. So in these sorts of situations there's no harm in asking for clarification. It's always OK to ask someone to repeat themselves.

Andrew: OK, so let's listen one more time to how the customer asked for clarification during the call.

Customer: Sorry, I didn't hear you. What did you say?

Andrew: OK, so she simply said, "Sorry, I didn't hear you. What did you say?" And I like this. It's to the point, it's simple, it's polite. But there are many ways we can do this, right?

Morag, what are some other ways we could ask for clarification if we don't understand the person on the other end of the phone?

Morag: I think my most used would be simply saying, "I'm sorry, I didn't hear what you just said."

Andrew: "I'm sorry, I didn't hear what you just said," yeah. Maybe I'm too Canadian but I would say, "Sorry? Sorry?"

Morag: I think that's the first step, "Pardon?" And then if that doesn't work, often you can say one of those short clarification requests, like "Sorry? Excuse me? What?"

Andrew: Yeah, then you can say, "Can you repeat that, please?" Or, "I didn't understand what you said," something like this, absolutely.

Morag: Mmhmm, yeah.

Andrew: All right. Moving on, we are going to look at the last element of this conversation, and that is **troubleshooting** the problem.

Morag: Tech support will often ask you to do many different things to try and solve your problem. In the conversation you heard in this episode, Ricky asked the customer to launch the settings app.

Andrew: Right. So here, launch, l-a-u-n-c-h, means open, right?

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: So Ricky, Mr. Customer Service Representative, he asked the customer to open the settings app on the phone.

Morag: There are actually quite a number of specialized verbs that we use in English when talking about technology. Launch is one of them, so it's likely that you'll hear a few of these on a tech support call. So, Andrew, you wanna quickly go over what some of these mean?

Andrew: Yeah, sure. And like you said, Morag, there are tons. So, guys, look in the learning materials for this episode to learn more about some of these tech verbs. We don't have enough time to hit them all today. But some of the most important ones I think are, well, first, hook up, OK? Hook up. Hook up means to connect to devices using a cable. So, for example, you can hook up a computer to a monitor. What else do we have, Morag?

Morag: Well, there's always power up or power down, and that means either to turn on in the case of power up, or to turn off in the case of power down.

Andrew: Yup. So you can power up your phone, power up the computer, or do the opposite, power both of those things down.

            Another word that we use often to talk about computers is to set up, set up. And this means installing a piece of software or even configuring a new computer, right? You are setting up the software or setting up the computer.

Morag: I just had to do a quick setup on a new router the other day.

Andrew: Ooh, that sounds not very fun.

Morag: Honestly, I like doing this kind of stuff so it was OK by me, but …

Andrew: Oh, cool. Well that's a great example of how you can set up a piece of technology. The last verb that we have time to look at today is to back up, OK? Back up. Now this doesn't mean reverse in your car, it means to save your data in multiple places, OK?

            So you might have to back up your photos by saving them on your hard drive and on the internet, on a cloud-based storage site. So this means back up. And, again, if you call tech support, a common question you might hear is, "Before we try this, did you back up all the files on your computer?" You know, just in case something goes wrong?

Morag: You can also hear this one as a noun. "So you do have a backup?"

Andrew: Hmm, good point.

Morag: And a backup is the copy of the originals that you have stored on a different device. So, for example, I have a backup of all of my files on an external hard drive.

Andrew: You're well prepared.

Morag: Mmhmm.

            All right, everybody. That brings us to the end of today's episode.

Andrew: Yeah. And we're going to be replaying the conversation one more time at the end of the show, so stay tuned for that.

Morag: That's right. And if you enjoyed today's episode, please support us. It would be awesome if you left us a five-star ranking and a nice review on iTunes. And also tell your friends to listen to Culips.

Andrew: Yup. And, as always, if you have any questions or comments for us, you can send us a message through our Facebook page at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, or visit our website, Culips.com.

Morag: That's it for now. We'll be back soon with another new episode.

Andrew: Bye.

Morag: Goodbye.

CS Rep:	Thanks for calling Fast Tech Electronics. My name is Ricky. **How may I assist you?**
Customer:	Hey. Um, I recently bought a pair of your Bluetooth headphones and I can't get them to **sync** to my phone. I think they're broken.
CS Rep:	Sure, ma'am, I can help you with that. But before anything else, can I have your name so I can address you properly?
Customer:	My name is Andrea Gustafsson.
CS Rep:	OK, thank you Mrs. Gustafsson. So your headphones aren't working. Can I get the model number of your headphones and of your phone, too?
Customer:	I'm using an iPhone 7 and the headphone model number is XL909.
CS Rep:	Have you tried pairing the headphones and the phone?

Customer:	Pairing? I don't understand what that is.
CS Rep:	Ah, OK. Pairing is just connecting the headphones and the phone together. I can help you pair your phone and headphones, but first I just need you to **reboot** your phone.
Customer:	How do I do that?
CS Rep:	OK, just turn it off and then turn it on again.
Customer:	OK. OK, OK, done.
CS Rep:	OK. Now you need to prepare the headphones to pair to the phone. All you need to do is press the button on the left side of the headphones and hold it down for 5 seconds.
Customer:	OK. All right, I've done that.
CS Rep:	Now I want you to launch the settings app on your phone.
Customer:	Sorry, I didn't hear you. What did you say?
CS Rep:	Please launch the settings app by tapping on the settings icon.
Customer:	OK. OK, yup, done.
CS Rep:	Now tap the Bluetooth option.
Customer:	OK.
CS Rep:	And finally, select Excel 909.
Customer:	OK! Yeah, done.
CS Rep:	Awesome. Your phone and headphones are now paired, and you can use your headphones to listen to music right from your phone.
Customer:	Excellent. Thank you so much for your help.
CS Rep:	Is there anything else I can help you with today?
Customer:	No thanks. Have a good day.

CS Rep: Take care. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

To troubleshoot/troubleshooting

To troubleshoot is a verb that has two related meanings. The first meaning is to try to identify and solve a problem. This is the more general definition, which can mean working to solve any kind of problem. No matter what kind of problem you're dealing with— technical, interpersonal, mechanical, financial—**to troubleshoot** means to figure out what the problem is and how best to deal with it. For example, if you're having problems with your personal finances, you could **troubleshoot** your budgeting. In other words, you could look at your personal budget to try to fix your money problems.

Troubleshooting comes from **to troubleshoot**. It refers to is the process of identifying and solving a problem.

However, **to troubleshoot** and **troubleshooting** are most commonly used when talking about identifying issues with computers and other technology. So, when people talk about **troubleshooting**, they likely are specifically referring to the process of identifying and correcting problems with computers or a computer system.

Here are a couple more examples with **to troubleshoot** and **troubleshooting**:

Janice:	How do you like your new apartment?
Alan:	It's great! There's just one problem: the oven. I can't get it to work!
Janice:	I could come over and **troubleshoot** the oven, if you like. I'm really good at fixing old appliances. I used to work for a little appliance repair shop when I was younger.
Alan:	That would be amazing! If you could figure out and fix the problem, I would be so grateful.

Denise:	Hey, Steve, do you still have those pictures we took on vacation last year? Could you send them to me?
Steve:	Sure, I can send them to you once I can get access to my files again.
Denise:	Oh no, is something wrong with your computer?
Steve:	Something is very wrong with it. I spent 2 hours **troubleshooting** the problem, but I couldn't figure it out!

How may I assist you?

When calling tech support, the first thing you'll want to do is tell the customer service representative why you're calling. The customer service representative will start the conversation by saying something like, "**How may I assist you?**" This sentence is a polite way of asking you to state the reason you're calling. There are several ways this question could be phrased:

- How can I help you?

- What can I do for you?

- What seems to be the problem?

- How can I be of service?

All of these questions do the same thing: They are prompting you to explain the problem you need help solving.

Once you hear a question like, "**How may I assist you?**" or any of the variations listed above, you can go ahead and state the problem you're having. Start by saying "I'm calling about" and then explain the issue. If you don't state the problem right away, you're likely to hear the customer service representative repeat another phrasing of their question. See the second dialogue below for an example of this situation.

So, **how may I assist you?** means "please tell me why you're calling today."

Here are a couple more examples with **how may I assist you?**:

CS Rep:	Hi, you've reached the help line. **How may I assist you?**
Hank:	I'm calling about my router. I moved yesterday and the router suddenly stopped working once I hooked it up in the new apartment.

CS Rep:	This is Joel with customer support. **How can I help you?**
Marianne:	Hi, Joel. I'm calling about my computer.
CS Rep:	All right, **what seems to be the issue?**
Marianne:	I can't get it to turn on!

To sync

Problems **synching** devices are a very common reason to call tech support. So, let's take a closer look at **to sync**. With computers and other electronic devices, there are two types of **syncing**. The first type of **syncing** is when two devices connect and recognize one another. For example, when two devices connect with each other over Bluetooth, this is called **syncing**. In the dialogue example from this episode, we heard an example of someone being unable **to sync** their Bluetooth headphones with their phone. In other words, their phone wasn't able to link with the headphones and successfully play music over them.

The other type of **synching** is sharing files and data between two devices so that the information is the same on both. For example, if you use a calendar application or program that **syncs** information between devices, you can add an event on your computer and see that event on the same program on your phone. That's because the two devices are sharing data with each other. If you have a problem where information doesn't match between two devices, this is another example of a **synching** problem.

So, if you can't connect one device with another or can't get two devices to share data, these are both **synching** problems.

Here's one more example with **to sync**:

CS Rep:	Hi, you've reached the customer support line. How can I help you?
Fred:	Hi, I'm having trouble **syncing** my external hard drive with my computer. I can't get the computer to recognize when the hard drive is plugged in!

To boot/reboot

One of the most common things you'll be asked when you call tech support is to either **boot** or **reboot** your device. As mentioned in this episode, **to reboot** means to turn something off and back on again.

However, don't be confused if, instead of being asked **to reboot**, the representative asks you **to boot** your device. **To boot** simply means to turn something on! So, if your device was already on, then they want you to turn it off and back on again.

Here's one more example with **to boot/reboot**:

Edgar:	OK, I've plugged everything in like you told me.
CS Rep:	Great. Now I'm going to need you **to boot** the device. Just go ahead and turn it on again.

Asking for clarification

As we've mentioned in this episode, calling tech support can be stressful and difficult! Understanding someone in English on the phone can be hard, and there's a lot of specific vocabulary involved when talking about technology. So, whether you didn't hear what someone said or you need them to explain a term, it's important to know how to ask for clarification!

If you're having trouble hearing what the representative said, you can use one of these phrases to politely prompt them to repeat it:

- I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

- I didn't catch what you just said.

- Could you say that one more time?

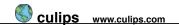- I'm having trouble hearing you. Can you speak more slowly?

If you don't understand a term the representative used, you can use one of these phrases:

- I'm sorry, I don't know what [term] means.

- Can you explain what [term] is?

- I'm not familiar with [term].

When calling tech support, don't be embarrassed if you have trouble understanding the person who is trying to help you. Ask for clarification as much as you need!

Here are a couple more examples of **asking for clarification**:

CS Rep:	OK, now please open the task manager.
Felicia:	**I'm sorry, I don't know what task manager means**.
CS Rep:	No problem. It's a window I need you to open. You do that by pressing the Control, Alt, and Delete keys at the same time.

CS Rep:	Please reboot the device.
Sidney:	**I didn't catch what you said.**
CS Rep:	Please reboot the device. Turn it off and on again.

Tech verbs

As Andrew and Morag mentioned in this episode, there are many verbs specific to computers and technology. Let's take a look at a few:

- **to launch**: to open a program in a computer

- **to swipe**: to move your finger over a touchscreen, such as one on a smart phone, to scroll through something, such as a web page

- **to click**: to select something, either with your finger on a touchscreen or a mouse on a computer

- **to drag**: to select and move something on a computer or touch screen

- **to copy and paste:** to take a copy of text or an image (to copy), and to deposit what you've copied in a new location (to paste)

- **to print**: to put an electronic document onto paper

- **to log in/out:** to log in or out is another way of saying to sign in or out. When you log in to something, you enter your user name and password to access your account or profile. Logging out is closing that account or profile

- **to scroll:** to move through a webpage, document, or window on a computer

Here are a couple of examples with two of these **tech verbs**:

Sharon:	Can I use your computer?
Mike:	Yeah, no problem. Go ahead, it's already on.
Sharon:	You're right that the computer is on, but you're not **logged in**.
Mike:	Sorry! Here, let me **log in** and you'll be able to access everything.

Lauren:	Can I use the maps app on your phone?
Sidney:	Sure, here you go.
Lauren:	I can't find the app.
Sidney:	It's on the second screen. Just **swipe** to the right and you'll find it.

Quiz

1. To reboot means to do what with a device?

a) turn it off

b) turn it on

c) turn it off and then on

d) throw it away

2. If you don't understand a term a customer service representative has said, what's a polite way of asking them to explain it?

a) What's [term]?

b) I don't get it.

c) What do you mean?

d) I'm sorry, I don't know what [term] means.

3. True or false: When two devices sync, this can mean they connect to one another or are sharing files and data.

a) true

b) false

4. To troubleshoot is a verb that means to try to identify and _____ a problem.

a) create

b) explain

c) solve

d) forget

5. What information is the customer service representative asking for when they say, "How may I assist you?"

a) what you've done to try and fix your problem

b) the general problem you are calling about

c) the type of device you are calling about

d) your name and personal information

Quiz Answers

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

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