

Real Talk #064 – How to ask for help in a store (ad free)

Episode description

Have you ever wandered through a store for a long time and still couldn't find what you needed? In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Kassy teach you how to ask for help in English when you're shopping. You'll learn useful phrases and polite expressions that native English speakers use when they can't find a product in a supermarket or department store. The episode includes example conversations and clear explanations to help you understand and use the language with confidence.

Fun fact

In English, asking questions suddenly and directly—like “*Where is it?*”—can sometimes sound a little **rude** or **abrupt**. Instead, native speakers often use softer, more polite phrases such as:

- ✓ “Hi, I’m having trouble finding [the cereal aisle?]”
- ✓ “Excuse me, could you help me find [the pet food section?]”

Expressions included in the study guide

- I'm having trouble finding...
- Could you point me in the right direction?
- While I'm at it...
- Do you know if you carry...?
- I've been looking all over
- Let me help you track it down



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Real Talk episode #64, "How to ask for help finding something in a store."
Featuring Andrew and Kassy. Hello, everyone, and welcome to Real Talk, the Culips series where we teach you the English that you need to know for real-world situations. Joining me today for this lesson is my co-host, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy. How are you today?

Kassy: Hey, Andrew. I'm doing great, as always.

Andrew: Good to hear it, Kassy. And today, I think we've got a very helpful lesson planned for everyone. Guys, today we are going to teach you how to ask for help when you're in a store shopping. You know, these days there are so many big box stores or huge supermarkets, and sometimes we can go into these stores and just wander the aisles, going up the aisles and down the aisles, looking for what we want to buy, and yeah, it's kind of a waste of time. To speed that shopping experience up, you could just ask for help, find the product that you need really quickly, and then get on your way. So that's what we're going to teach you how to do here today, is ask for help in a large store, like a department store or a big supermarket. Think that kind of situation. And Kassy we'll kick things off by listening to a conversation example between a customer and a department store employee. The customer is trying to locate a certain product and he asks the employee for help. So, let's take a listen right now to see how he does that.

Kassy: Sounds great.

Customer: Excuse me, **I'm having trouble finding** the kitchenware section. **Could you point me in the right direction?**

Store employee: Yeah, sure thing. The kitchenware is on the third floor, next to the home appliances section.

Customer: OK, third floor, thanks. And hey, **while I'm at it, do you know if you carry** silicone muffin tins?

Store employee: Yeah, we do. Once you're in kitchenware, look for the baking supplies aisle. They should be there, but if you can't find them, just ask any employee on that floor. They'll help you.

Customer: Alright, perfect. Thanks.

Andrew: Kassy, do you want to just break down that conversation that we just heard? What happened in that interaction between the customer and the employee?

Kassy: OK, sounds good. So, the customer was looking for the kitchenware section, which is where you can find any of your appliances or tools that you need in the kitchen, of course. And the first big phrase I want to look at is, "**I'm having trouble finding**." They said, "**I'm having trouble finding** the kitchenware section." After they said that to the employee, the employee helped them out in finding that section. I think "**I'm having trouble finding** [blah blah]" is a great phrase to start this conversation, right, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, guys, what you could do here is just keep it simple, right? You could say, "Excuse me, where's the kitchenware section?" But that's a little blunt. It's not too polite. It's rather direct. Of course, it's fine. But I think most native speakers wouldn't say that just because it does feel really direct and a little bit impolite. So maybe saying something like, "**I'm having trouble finding** the kitchenware section." "**I'm having trouble finding** the men's clothing area of the store." "**I'm having trouble finding**

the produce section." And the produce section is where fruits and vegetables are sold at a grocery store, right? That kind of expression is quite polite and a nice way to signal to an employee that you need help finding that area of the store.

Kassy: Exactly. And to follow up with the politeness factor of this question, the customer then asked, "**Could you point me in the right direction?**" **Could you point me in the right direction?** And what they're asking here is, you know, the employee doesn't have to physically point, but they're going to then tell the customer which way to go. "Could you give me some help? Which way should I go?"

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. Again, we could keep it simple and just say, "Could you show me?" or "Could you help me?" But this is a more advanced phrase. It's more polite, more natural. "**Could you point me in the right direction?**" And we don't have to limit using this expression only to this situation where you're looking for something in a big store. You could also use it at the office, right, Kassy? Like, maybe I'm a new employee at the office and Kassy, you're a veteran, you've worked there for 10 years, and I'm trying to learn how to do things, the new kind of system at the office, right? When you enter a new workplace, there's always a certain way to do things for that company or for that office. And maybe I don't know exactly what to do. So, Kassy, I could ask you for help and I could say, "Hey, Kassy, could you help me here?" Like, "**Could you point me in the right direction?** How should I file these files?" Like, "What is the system here for this office?" Right? So, you could use it in a lot of different situations when you need help or assistance from someone.

Kassy: And I also want to clarify, because Andrew and I talked about how funny this is before we started recording, when we say, "**Could you point me in the right direction?**" That means the correct direction, not necessarily to the right.

Andrew: Yeah, don't get it confused. We're not talking about left and right. Here, "right" means correct. And yeah, it's just one of those little annoying things about English that "right" can mean a direction and it can also mean correct. And here, it's a little bit confusing, right? Because we're talking about the right direction, but we're talking about correct direction here. Good point, Kassy. Yeah. And then continuing through this conversation breakdown, the employee told the customer where to go. She said, "Yeah, the kitchenware is on the third floor." And then the customer said, "OK, thanks. And **while I'm at it....**" "**While I'm at it**" is the next kind of interesting phrase that we heard. And yeah, he wanted to ask about some muffin tins, you know, the kind of special baking tin that you use for making muffins or cupcakes. Yeah, he wanted to buy one of those. So, he said, "**While I'm at it, do you know if you carry** silicone muffin tins?" Kassy, maybe you could break this down for us. Let's do it in two parts. Let's start with "**while I'm at it.**" What does that mean exactly?

Kassy: "**While I'm at it**" means like, while I have you. Since I'm asking you one question, maybe I might as well just ask you two questions while you're here to help me. So "**while I'm at it**" means, "While you're here, could I ask you something else?"

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. It's like you're already in the process of doing one thing, so you might as well do a second connected thing at the same time, right? Like maybe you would go to the gas station to put some gas in your car, and then **while you're at it**, you'll also wash your car at the same time. Go through the car wash. You're already doing one activity, so you can do another second connected activity at the same time. So, in this case, the customer's already asking one question, so he might as well ask a second connected question at the same time. So that's what "**while you're at it**" means, and we can use it in a ton of different situations in our daily English conversations. And then the next part of the question is, "**Do you know if you carry.**" "**Do you know if you carry** silicone muffin tins?" So, Kassy, break this one down for us.

Kassy: "Do you know if you carry [something]?" is just another way of saying, "Do you have something?" Usually, we would use this phrase when you're in a store where the person you're asking doesn't physically have this thing. They're talking about, you know, the store as a whole. Does the store as a whole have this item? **Do they carry** this item?

Andrew: Yeah, think about, like, a huge department store. Usually, the employees at a store, you know, they work in their one little area, but they don't know about every product the store sells. So maybe even the employee wouldn't know, you know, if they sell that item. So that's why you phrase it like, "Do you know?" because maybe that employee would actually have to check. Right? Like, think about if I go to a bookstore, Kassy. I know you're a big reader, so this is a good example. You go to a bookstore, and maybe you want to ask about a specific book. Maybe it's not a popular book or bestseller. So, you would ask the employee, like, "Do you know if you have this book? **Do you know if you carry** this book?" Right? It's like, maybe you don't know. Maybe you have to check on the computer to find out. So that's why we ask it in that way. And here, "**carry**," you know, usually we think of the verb "**to carry**," meaning to hold something. But in this case, it's not to hold. It means to have in stock, right? To have it in your store. So, when a store carries a product, it means that they have it available to sell to you.

Kassy: Very well said, Andrew. And I think we've pretty much covered everything in this conversation example. So why don't we move on to conversation example number two?

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, for this conversation example, guys, we're going to hear just another conversation again between a customer and a store employee. But this time, we're changing settings. We're going from a department store to a large supermarket. And again, you know, there are thousands and thousands and thousands of products in a large supermarket. So sometimes it's hard to find and locate exactly what you want. And it's just a faster way to do things by asking a staff member for help. So that's what we're going to hear in this conversation example. And let's take a listen to it right now. Here we go.

Customer: I've been looking all over for tahini paste, but I can't seem to find it anywhere. **Do you know if you carry it?**

Store employee: Yeah, let me check. We should have it. I don't know. It might be in one of three places, the International Food aisle, with the spreads near the peanut butter, or in the health food section.

Customer: Well, I've already checked the spread section with no luck.

Store employee: OK. Well, in that case, **let me help you track it down.** I'll just check our computer system to see the exact location.

Customer: That would be great. Thank you.

Store employee: Yeah, no worries. OK. So, it looks like we keep it in the International Food section, which is on aisle seven about halfway down on the left side.

Customer: Thank you so much. I'll go right there.

Andrew: So, let's recap this conversation example that we just heard. There was a store employee at a supermarket, supermarket employee, and a customer talking about tahini paste. And they were trying to locate the tahini paste in this massive, massive supermarket. So, Kassy, let's talk about some of the key phrases and expressions that were important to this conversation. And the first one, the customer says, which was, "**I've been looking all over for** [something]." "**I've been looking all over for** tahini paste." And yeah, basically, this expression is communicating that you've already been putting in some effort, right? Maybe you're a little bit frustrated in this situation. And the nuance is that you need some help, right? **You've been looking all over**, you can't find it. Maybe you're a little frustrated and you want some help from the staff.

Kassy: Andrew, I don't know about you, but I have used this phrase multiple times when talking to someone. For example, maybe I was supposed to meet a friend somewhere or I

was watching my little cousin at the playground, and they got away from me. And when we finally meet up, I'm like, "**I've been looking all over for** you. Where have you been?"

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. We use it in that kind of situation all the time. And it does have that nuance of being a little frustrated, right?

Kassy: So, this person was frustrated with the tahini, but you can also be frustrated with, with somebody else.

Andrew: Yeah, you could be frustrated with, yeah, a little child for wandering off, right? And you're expressing that you're stressed and worried, like, "Where have you been? **I've been looking all over for** you." Maybe also if you're late for an appointment and you have to leave your house, and this happened to me recently, I talked about it in a Culips bonus episode. I couldn't find my wallet. And so, I was frustrated. I was like, "**I've been looking all over for my** wallet. Where is it?" Yeah, so this is a good expression to add to your vocabulary to use when you do feel that little bit of frustration. And speaking of frustration, the next expression also communicates this, right? "I can't seem to find it anywhere." So, the customer said, "**I've been looking all over** for tahini paste and I can't seem to find it anywhere."

Kassy: **Andrew's been looking all over** his apartment, but he can't seem to find his wallet anywhere.

Andrew: Exactly, exactly. Right? So, it's like, you can't find it. And you're a little bit frustrated that nuance is baked in, included into this expression. Kassy, did you hear anything else interesting from this conversation? Maybe something that popped into your mind that you thought it was good for listeners to know about?

Kassy: This is not a phrase, but it is a vocabulary word, "The spreads section." I love the spreads section of a grocery store.

Andrew: Regular Culips listeners will know that I'm a peanut butter lover, and I'm happy here in Korea, Kassy. Have you noticed there's a peanut butter... I don't want to say "renaissance" because "renaissance" means a rebirth. I don't think peanut butter was ever too popular, but suddenly it has exploded in popularity, and there's all kinds of new peanut butter products available on the shelves at the grocery store, so I'm super happy about that.

Kassy: Yeah, me too.

Andrew: Have you noticed that at all?

Kassy: I have, and also the other types of weird spreads, weird and enjoyable, for example, pistachio spread, and Nutella, and cookie butter, so much.

Andrew: Yeah, and in North America, there's all kinds of different nut butters as well, right? Like almond butter or cashew butter, and I should mention here, guys, just in case you're not familiar with these foods, it has nothing to do with butter.

Kassy: Yeah.

Andrew: My wife initially was confused about that. She was like, "I don't want to eat peanut butter because I don't like butter too much." She doesn't really enjoy a kind of creamy, buttery flavor. And I said, "No, no, no, it's just the name. There's no butter in it. It's just made from peanuts." All of these kind of nut butters, the nut has been ground into a consistency that maybe is similar to butter, but there's no connection to the dairy product butter, so don't have to worry about that. But that's what you'll find in the spreads aisle, jams, jellies, nut butters, that kind of thing.

Kassy: Another phrase that I liked, it's... it's similar to this... this feeling of frustration that we got from, "**I've been looking all over**, and I can't seem to find it anywhere." The customer also said, "I've checked the spread section with no luck." This person is just repeating their frustration. "I can't find it. I've had no luck. I'm completely lost. Please help a guy out." Or in this case, a gal out.

Andrew: Yeah, no luck. This just means you are very unsuccessful at trying to do something, right? I've tried to do something with no luck. I've tried to find the tahini paste with no luck. You just can't find it. You've been unsuccessful at doing that. And then, Kassy, I think the last key expression from this example that I wanted to talk about was how the store employee responded. He said, "OK, **let me help you track it down.**" **Let me help you track it down. Let me help you track that tahini paste down.** So, this is a nice phrasal verb. And what does it mean? What does "**track [something] down**" mean?

Kassy: The visual that comes to my mind is tracking an animal, which means, you know, like a hunter in the woods would look at their footprints, their tracks on the ground, and use that to go look for it and hunt it and hopefully kill it if they're lucky, unfortunately. That's what hunters do. Anyway, but in this case, it's similar. You're... you're trying to go hunt down that item. You're trying **to track it down**.

Andrew: Yeah, so here it just means to find something, right? When something is difficult to locate and you're trying to find it, we can use that phrasal verb **to track it down**. Kassy, I'm wondering if any other examples come to mind. Could you give us maybe a few situations where we could use "**track it down**" to talk about finding something?

Kassy: As a teacher, maybe I have a student that I need them to... to sign a form or I have another teacher that I want to ask them a question, but maybe I go to their room and... and they're not there. I'm like, "Ah, OK." So, then I try **to track them down** by going

to different places in the school. Maybe it's really important that I see them right now. So, I have to do a little bit more extra effort in finding them. I have **to track them down**.

Andrew: Yeah, I love that. That is a very good example. And I think this imagery of hunting is a really good image to keep in your mind. Like, it's almost like you're a hunting dog, like a basset hound, right? You're on the hunt with the hunter and you're using your senses, your nose to try and find what it is you're looking for. Another example I could think of is maybe if you're a collector of something, maybe a collector of rare books or a collector of LPs or something, like records, old records. Maybe you have, like, a record or a book that you want to add to your collection, but it's not easy to find. And you could try and **track it down** by going to all of the different stores in your city to see if they have it or going to the internet and searching used record stores or different used bookstores online to see if you could **track down** that rare book or record that you want to buy. Those are some other ways that we could use it. Well, Kassy, I think that'll bring us almost to the end of this episode. And I thought just quickly before we wrap things up, we could say a few things about store culture, shopping culture in North America. And in my opinion, it's never really rude to ask for help in this kind of situation. That's what the staff is there for. And they're trained to deal with customers. Having good customer service is something that many retail outlets, many stores, really value and they want to have good interactions between staff and customers. So, yeah, I don't think you need to be shy about interacting with store staff in this way. I think it's totally fine to ask for help if you need it.

Kassy: I totally agree. And if it's a really big store, oftentimes they have an information desk somewhere near the front, maybe to the left of the checkout counter. So, you can... if you can't find any employees walking around the aisles, you could always go back to the front of the store and try to look for the information desk.

Andrew: Yeah, very good point. That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

I'm having trouble finding...

Expression

In the first example conversation, the customer says, "Excuse me, **I'm having trouble finding** the kitchenware section." This is a polite way to ask for help when you can't find something in a store.

The phrase "**I'm having trouble finding...**" means that you are looking for something, but you can't find it on your own. You've tried already, but now you need help. It's a soft and friendly way to begin your question, and it shows that you're not being too direct or rude. Andrew and Kassy explain that using this phrase sounds more natural in English than saying something like "Where is the kitchenware section?" which can sound too short or a little impolite. Instead, "**I'm having trouble finding...**" is something native speakers use often when talking to store staff, coworkers, or anyone they need help from.

This phrase is useful in many situations, not just while shopping. For example, you can say, "**I'm having trouble finding** the bus stop, could you tell me where it is?" If your coworker was supposed to send you a file but you don't have it, you might say, "**I'm having trouble finding** the file in my e-mail." This sounds softer and more polite than, "Where is it?" or "You didn't send me the file."

The word "trouble" in this case means a small problem or difficulty, and "**having trouble finding**" is a common way to explain that you can't find something right now.

Some similar phrases are "I can't seem to find..." or "I'm looking for..., but I don't see it anywhere." These all show that you need help in a polite and respectful way.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm having trouble finding...**:

Student: Hi, **I'm having trouble finding** the books about world history.

Librarian: Oh, those are in the non-fiction section, aisle 4. I can show you.

Student: That would be great, thanks!

Passenger: Excuse me, **I'm having trouble finding** Gate B12.

Airport Staff: No problem. Just take the escalator down one level and turn left.

Passenger : Got it, thank you!

Could you point me in the right direction?

Expression

In the first example dialogue at the store, the customer says, “**Could you point me in the right direction?**” This is a polite way to ask for help when you are trying to find something or figure out what to do next. It means, “Can you help me find the correct place?” or “Can you guide me to the right option?” In this case, the customer wanted to find the kitchenware section in a large store.

Andrew and Kassy explain that this expression is more polite and more natural than just saying, “Where is it?” or “Help me.” It shows that you are respectful and not demanding. Native English speakers often use this phrase in stores, schools, offices, or anywhere they need help. For example, if you are at a university and want to know where to register for classes, you might ask, “**Could you point me in the right direction** for class registration?” If you are new at work and don’t know how to do a task, you could say, “**Could you point me in the right direction** on how to start this project?”

This phrase is helpful because it works in many different situations. You can use it when you are looking for a place, a person, or even information. It sounds polite, shows that you respect the other person’s time and knowledge, and makes your English sound smooth and professional. One important thing to note: the word “right” in this sentence means “correct,” NOT the opposite of left. So “the right direction” means the correct way.

Some similar expressions are “Could you help me figure this out?” or “Do you know where I should go?” But “**Could you point me in the right direction?**” is especially useful when you’re not just looking for a thing—but looking for *the best way* to move forward. For example, “**Could you point me in the right direction** to learn more about this topic?” or “**Could you point me in the right direction** to apply for a student visa?”

Here are a couple more examples with **Could you point me in the right direction?**:

Customer: Excuse me, **could you point me in the right direction** to the baby products?

Employee: Sure! They’re in aisle 12, near the back of the store.

Customer: Great, thank you!

Freshman: I’m not sure which classes to take next semester. **Could you point me in the right direction?**

Academic Advisor: Sure. Let’s look at your program requirements and interests to make a plan.

While I'm at it...

Expression

In the first conversation at the store, the customer says, "OK, thanks. **And while I'm at it**, do you know if you carry silicone muffin tins?" The phrase "**while I'm at it**" is used when you are already doing one thing and you decide to do something else that is **related or connected** at the same time. In this example, the customer was already asking about where to find the kitchenware section. Then, while he was talking to the employee, he decided to ask one more question about muffin tins.

Andrew and Kassy explain that this is a very common and polite way to add a second question or task when you are already doing something. It's like saying, "*Since I'm already here asking you for help, I'll ask one more thing too.*"

You can use "**while I'm at it**" in many everyday situations. For example, if you're asking for help finding the men's department at the clothing store, you might add, "**While I'm at it**, could you tell me where the dressing rooms are?" Or, if you are at the store buying milk, you could say to yourself, "**While I'm at it**, I should buy some eggs."

Here are a few more examples:

- "I'm going to email my boss. **While I'm at it**, I'll email the team too."
- "I'm going to the kitchen. **While I'm at it**, do you want a glass of water?"
- "Are you printing your report? **While you're at it**, could you print this document for me?"

One important thing to know is that "**while I'm at it**" should be used when the second thing is related or makes sense with the first thing. Don't use it when the two things are totally different. For instance, it sounds wrong to say, "I'm brushing my teeth. **While I'm at it**, I'll apply for a job." ❌ This doesn't make sense. Brushing your teeth and applying for a job have nothing to do with each other. You can't do both at the same time, and they are not part of the same activity.

Here are a couple more examples with **While I'm at it...**:

Customer: Hi there, I need some paint brushes.

Shop Clerk: You'll find them in aisle 9.

Customer: Awesome, thanks. **While I'm at it**, do you know if you carry painter's tape?

Carlos: Will you make spaghetti for dinner tonight?

Monica: Sure. **While I'm at it**, I'll boil some extra noodles for lunch tomorrow.

Do you know if you carry...?

Expression

In both example dialogues from the episode, the customer uses the expression, “**Do you know if you carry [noun]?**” This question is a polite way to ask if the store has a certain product. We use this expression when talking to a store employee.

For example, you can say, “**Do you know if you carry** almond milk?” or “**Do you know if you carry** umbrellas?” The word “**carry**” in this sentence does NOT mean to hold something in your hands. It means that the store sells the item or has it in stock. Andrew and Kassy explain that we often use this question when we are in a big store with many products and we’re not sure if they have what we’re looking for. This is especially helpful when we think the person we are asking may not know the answer right away and might need to check on the computer or ask someone else.

Asking “**Do you carry...?**” is polite, too. However, using “**Do you know if you carry...?**” makes the question sound even more polite and respectful. In English, especially in customer service situations, people often use indirect language. That’s why asking “**Do you know...**” is a great choice—it helps you sound more natural and more like a native speaker. For instance, you could ask, “**Do you know when** the store closes today?” instead of “When does the store close today?” or “**Do you know where** I can find cat litter?” instead of “Where can I find cat litter?”

Some similar expressions include:

- “Do you know if you have...?”
- “Would you happen to have...?” (a bit more formal)
- “Is this something you sell?”

Here are a couple more examples with **Do you know if you carry...?**:

Customer: Excuse me, **do you know if you carry** kid-sized rain boots?

Staff: We do! They’re over in the children’s section on the right.

Customer: Oh, thanks so much!

Customer: Hi there, **do you know if you carry any** books in Spanish for beginners?

Cashier: We usually do. Let me see if we still have some in stock.

Customer: That would be great, thank you.

I've been looking all over

Expression

In the second example dialogue, the customer says, “**I've been looking all over for** tahini paste, but I can't seem to find it anywhere.” This sentence tells us that the customer has already spent some time and effort trying to find the item on their own.

The expression “**I've been looking all over...**” means: “I have searched in many places, but I still can't find what I need.” This is not something you say after looking for a minute or two. You say it after you've tried looking in many different spots and still have no luck. It shows that you really tried.

This makes the way you ask for help sound more polite and respectful. In English, especially in stores or public places, it's often better to be a little softer or less direct. For example, asking “Where is the tahini paste?” can sound a bit too strong or demanding, especially if you say it without any extra words like “Excuse me,” or “Hi there.” However, saying, “**I've been looking all over for** tahini paste,” shows that you tried your best and are now just asking for a little help. It feels friendlier.

This can also be a useful expression to use with coworkers or your boss at work. If you've been searching for a file in the filing cabinet but can't find it, you might say, “Hey, David, **I've been looking all over for the** ABC File. Could you help me find it?” This shows that you've already made an effort to find the file on your own and that you're not asking for help right away without trying first. It's a polite and professional way to ask for support while showing responsibility.

Here are a couple more examples with **I've been looking all over**:

Customer: Excuse me, **I've been looking all over for** brown rice, but I can't seem to find it anywhere.

Customer Service Desk: Hmm, it should be in aisle 7, near the grains and pasta.

Customer: Oh, thank you! I must have missed it.

Richard: Hi Sarah, do you have a minute? **I've been looking all over for** the Q2 sales report, but I can't find it in the shared folder.

Sarah: Ah, we moved it to a new folder last week. I'll send you the link.

Richard: Thanks so much—I was starting to think I was going crazy!

Let me help you track it down

Expression

In the conversation from the second example dialogue, the store employee says, “**OK, let me help you track it down.**” The customer couldn’t find the tahini paste and had already looked in several places, so the worker kindly offers to help. The expression “**Let me help you track it down**” means: *Let me help you find it, especially since it’s hard to find.*

We use “**track down**” when we are looking for something that is *not easy to find*. It shows that we may need to look carefully or search in a few different places. In this case, the store worker is saying they will help the customer by checking different spots or maybe even looking it up in the computer. This phrase is polite and helpful, and it sounds natural in everyday English.

The word “**track**” comes from the idea of following signs or clues, like when hunters or animals follow tracks, or footprints, in the forest. That’s why people say “**track down**” when they mean find something by searching carefully. It’s not just about finding something that is easy to see. It means putting in some effort to locate something that may be hidden, lost, or just difficult to spot.

You can use “track down” in many situations, like:

- At a store: “**Let me help you track down** the right size.”
- At work: “**I’ll try to track down** that missing file for you.”
- At school: “The teacher isn’t in her room, but **I’ll track her down** and let her know you stopped by.”
- At home: “**I’ve been trying to track down** my keys all morning!”

Here are a couple more examples with **Let me help you track it down**:

Customer: Excuse me, do you have this jacket in size small? I couldn’t find one on the rack.

Employee: I’m not sure, but **let me try and help you track one down.** I’ll check in the back room.

Customer: That would be wonderful. Thanks a bunch!

Rhonda: The printer isn’t working, and I can’t find the manual.

Stephan: No worries. **Let me help you track it down.** It might be in the storage room or online.

Stephan: Okay, thanks! I’ll follow your lead.

Expressions Quiz

1. **Choose the best option to complete the sentence. “Excuse me, _____ the cooking oil. Can you help me?”**
 - a) I’m looking quick
 - b) I’m having trouble finding
 - c) I have trouble find
 - d) I have trouble to found

2. **“I’ve been looking all over” means:**
 - a) I found it right away.
 - b) I looked under one shelf.
 - c) I gave up.
 - d) I’ve searched many places without success.

3. **Which of the following is another way to say, “Let me help you track it down”?**
 - a) Let me help you write it.
 - b) Let me help you buy it.
 - c) Let me help you find it.
 - d) Let me help you record it.

4. **You’re in a bookstore and want to know if they sell a certain book. What’s the most polite way to ask?**
 - a) Excuse me, do you know if you carry this book?
 - b) Where is this book?
 - c) I need this book now.
 - d) Find this book for me.

5. **Choose the best way to complete the sentence. “I’m checking my email. _____, I’ll reply to Sarah too.”**
 - a) While I’m at it
 - b) While I’m going
 - c) While I’m done
 - d) While I’m back

Listening Comprehension Quiz

6. Why do Andrew and Kassy say “I’m having trouble finding...” is better than “Where is...”?
7. In the first example conversation, where is the kitchenware section located?
8. What phrase does the customer use in the first example conversation to politely add a second question?
9. In the second example dialogue, what are some places the employee suggests the tahini paste might be?
10. According to Kassy and Andrew, what feeling does “I’ve been looking all over...” express?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. How do customer service experiences in your country compare to other countries you've visited? Have you ever had a bad experience with customer service in a store? What happened?
2. Do you think shopping in person is better or worse than shopping online? Why?
3. What advice would you give to someone shopping in your country for the first time?
4. Have you ever been to a self-checkout station? Did you find it easy or difficult? Do you prefer a traditional checkout with a cashier, or do you like the self-checkout system?
5. What kind of stores do you enjoy shopping in, and which ones do you try to avoid?

Quiz Answers

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

6. It sounds more polite and natural.

7. On the third floor.

8. While I'm at it...

9. The international food aisle, the spreads section, or the health food section.

10. Frustration or effort from trying to find something.

Episode credits

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