

COMMUNICATION

Solving technical problems

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_1013X

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can describe a simple technical problem and ask for help to fix it.
- I can offer suggestions for how to fix a simple technical problem.



Warm-up

Choose one of the **questions** and **ask** a classmate to find out more about them.

Option: Use **breakout rooms** and share what you learned about your classmate afterwards!



What device are you using right now?

What's your favourite device for video-calls?

How many devices do you have at home?

How often do you have problems with your devices?



Discuss

Answer the questions below to **prepare for the text** on the next slide.

**What do we mean by
tech support?**



**When was the last time
you called tech
support?**



Reading

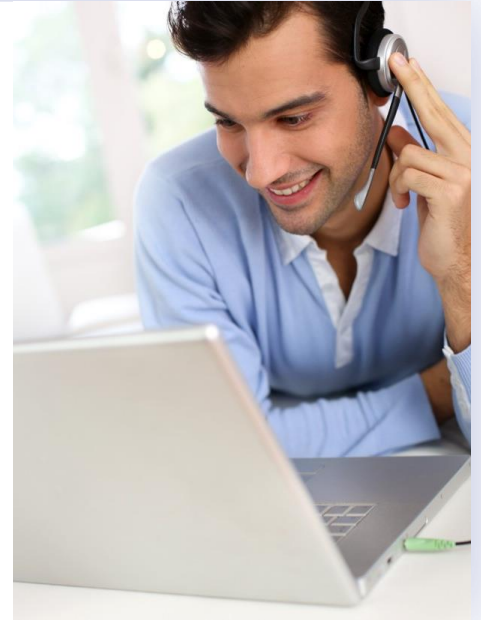
Read the text below and **answer the questions** in the red box.

Darren: Hello, this is Darren from tech support. How can I help you?

Bianca: Hi Darren. It's Bianca from Finance. I have a video-call this afternoon, but I think the office Wi-Fi is down. My video-calling software also keeps crashing and now my screen is completely frozen.

Darren: Hmm. Looks like you have a few issues there. Let's see what we can do. Can you restart your laptop? Press and hold the power button for five seconds.

Bianca: Sure. Oh! The screen just went blank. I can't see anything.



1. Which department does Darren work in?
2. Why does Bianca call Darren?
3. What is the first thing Darren tells Bianca to do?



Reading

Read the text below and **answer the questions** in the red box.

Darren: It needs to restart. Give it a moment... How about now? Is it any better?

Bianca: Hang on a sec... Yes! It looks like it's working fine now. Thanks!

Darren: Happy to help! Now try disconnecting and then connecting to the internet again. If the Wi-Fi continues to cause problems for you, we'll need to contact our internet provider to get it fixed.



4. What is the second thing Darren tells Bianca to do?
5. Are Bianca's technical problems solved?



Give it a moment...

Hang on a sec...

Do these phrases have the same meaning?

Discuss with your teacher and classmates.



How about now?
Is it any better?

Darren asks Bianca this question in the text, after she follows his instructions to restart her laptop.

What does he want to know? Can you think of another way to ask this?

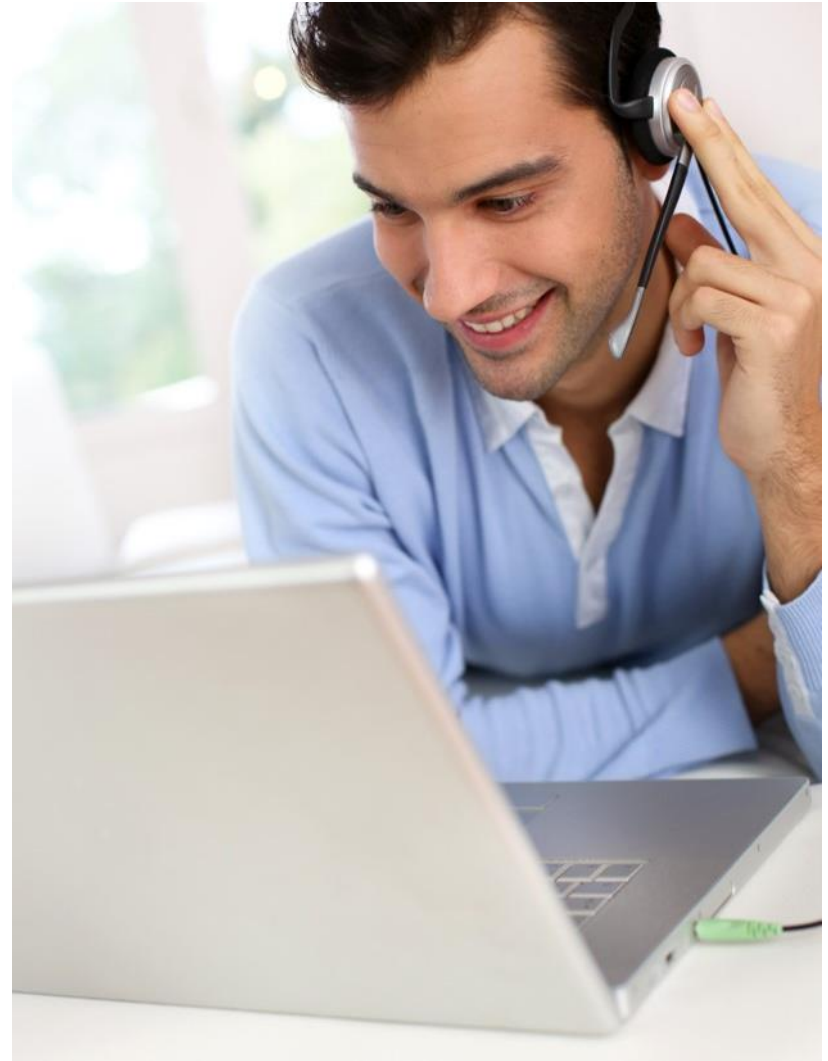
“

Looks like there's a problem with the hardware.

It looks like it's working fine now!

What does **(it) looks like** mean in these sentences?

How sure are the speakers?





Complete the dialogue

Fill in the gaps using the phrases in the red box, to complete the dialogue between a tech support agent and a caller. Afterwards, **practise the dialogue** with a classmate, taking turns being the tech support agent and the caller.

1 Hi, it's Lucy from tech support here! _____

2 Hi Lucy. I'm calling because I have a problem logging into my account. I _____ an error message.

3 _____ there are a lot of people trying to access the platform right now. That might be the problem. Try restarting the browser.

4 _____... Ok, I've done that. I'm logging in again...

5 _____ Is that any better?

Hang on a sec

keep seeing

How about now?

(It) looks like...

How can I help you?



keep + *-ing*

office
keeps

The software **keeps crashing**.

I can't work because my screen **keeps freezing**.

Your audio **keeps cutting out** – we can't hear you.

I **keep dropping** my phone when I go for a run and now it's broken.

- When something happens **again and again**, we can say it _____ happening.
- What does **cutting out** mean in this context? Does this ever happen to you?





Practise using *keep* + *-ing form*

Use the phrase *keep + ing form* and the verbs in the red box to complete the technical problems.

1 I don't know why my audio _____. Maybe there's something wrong with my mic.

2 My laptop _____ from the Wi-Fi.

3 I _____ problems whenever I open my browser. Maybe I need to update it to the latest version.

4 The video-call software _____ every time I try to open it. Are you having the same problem, or is it just me?

have
crash
disconnect
cut out



Try + -ing



Oh no, my screen just went blank!



Try restarting it... Give it a moment... How about now?

- We use _____ + verb (in *-ing form*) to give someone advice on how to fix a technical problem.
- We can also use this verb after the phrase: **why don't you...** to be even more polite.
- Can you rephrase the advice in the box using **why don't you...?**





Giving advice politely

Rephrase the advice below using the verb **to try** to make it sound more polite.

1 **Turn** your phone off and on again.



2 **Call** your internet provider.



3 **Speak** to tech support. They're usually quite helpful!

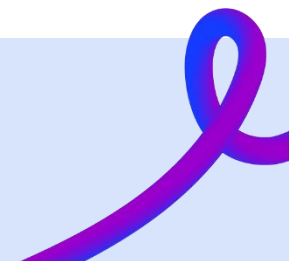


4 **Fix** it yourself before you take it to the computer repair shop.



5 **Connect** to a different Wi-Fi network.







Preparation for roleplay

Categorise the phrases below.
Which phrases does a **tech support agent** use? Which does a **caller** use?



How can I help?

Try...

Looks like...

Hang on a sec...

... keeps ...

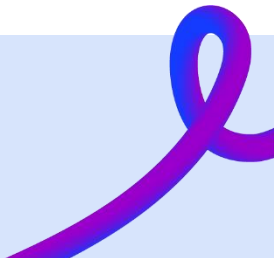
How about now?

Give it a moment...

Happy to help!

Can you...?

Could you...?





Calling tech support

Role-play a conversation between a tech support agent and a caller needing urgent help. The call is being **recorded** for training purposes: the other students in the class **make notes**.

Feedback: Was the tech support agent helpful? Was the caller satisfied with the service?

1



Tech support: Introduce yourself and prepare to help the caller.

Caller: Describe your technical problem(s) in detail. Let them know that you need urgent help because... (explain your situation).

2



Tech support: Respond to the caller's situation. Ask them questions to find out more information. First, try to identify the problem. Give advice.

Caller: Answer the tech support agent's questions. Respond to their advice.

3



Caller: The problem hasn't been solved and you don't have much time. Try to get an answer!

Tech support: Do your best to help the caller.



End of the lesson

Idiom

We got our wires crossed somehow!

Meaning: to be confused because of a misunderstanding
between two people in a conversation



Additional practice



Correct these sentences

Find the **mistakes** in these sentences and say them correctly to your teacher.

1



Can you turning off your computer?

2



I can't to see anything on my screen.

3



Could you to repeat that?

4



Do you check your Wi-Fi connection please?



Practise keep + -ing

Use the phrase *keep + ing* and the verbs in the red box to complete these sentences.

- 1 Ugh, my screen _____ whenever I'm watching a movie – always during a really big scene. I need a new computer!
- 2 My phone _____ to the Bluetooth and then my battery runs out.
- 3 I _____ issues with the Wi-Fi when I work from home. I need to find a new internet provider.
- 4 The website _____ because so many people are using it.

have
crash
connect
cut out
freeze



Discuss



Would working in tech support be fun? Why or why not?



Do you think you would like to work from home? Why or why not?



Practise *keep* + *-ing* and *try* + *-ing*

Practise describing and giving advice about technical problems. Take a moment to make some notes for your role. You can use the verbs in the red box to help you, as well as your own ideas.



Student A

Describe your ongoing technical problems.

My _____ keeps _____



Student B

Give student A advice about their problems.

Try _____

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| ● freeze | ● go blank |
| ● crash | ● restart |
| ● cut out | ● turn off |
| ● (dis)connect | ● cause (problems) |



Build sentences

Build complete sentences using the phrases in the first box and the verbs in the second box. You can also come up with your own verbs.

My mother keeps asking why I don't have kids.

Try listening to classical music – it really helps me to concentrate.



keep + -ing and try + -ing

- (It) keeps...
- Try...
- Why don't you try...
- You should try...

verbs

- | | |
|----------|----------------|
| • work | • break |
| • wake | • (dis)connect |
| • do | • go |
| • change | |
| • ask | |



Discuss these scenarios

Choose a situation. **What do you do** if this happens?

Has anything similar ever happened to you? How did you respond?



You have a major technical issue during a very important meeting at work...

You are about to give an online presentation to a large audience, but the Wi-Fi is down...

You have an interview online for your dream job and your laptop crashes 15 minutes before the video-call...

You just bought the latest version of a smartphone and your friend knocks it out of your hand accidentally...



Discuss

Do you do these things? Is there anything here that you don't (or can't) do? Expand on your answer (eg: *I don't play computer games, because I find them boring. My son does. He plays...*)



play computer games

use online banking

shop online

record music and videos

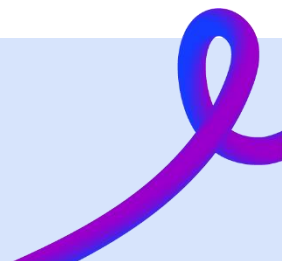
create a website

take part in a video-calls very regularly

solve most technical problems myself

code

build and repair computers





Discuss



Could we live without technology?

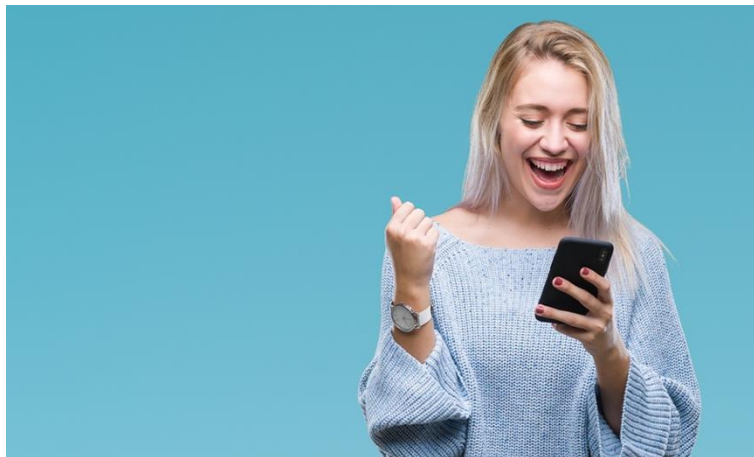
We could live without it...
We couldn't live without it...





Discuss

Can people still work as hard from outside of the office?



How stable is the internet connection in your area?



Answer key

P. 5:

1. Darren works in the technical support department
2. **Possible answers:** She is having technical problems; She is having problems with the office WiFi/her video-calling software; She needs his help
3. Darren tells her to restart her laptop

P.6:

4. Darren tells Bianca to try disconnecting and then reconnecting to the internet.
5. Bianca says that it looks like it's working fine. We don't know if she will be able to connect to the internet.

P.7:

1. Hang on a sec
2. Give it a moment

P.8: He wants to know if the problem is fixed... He could ask: 'Is it working now?'

P.9: The phrase *(It) looks like* in these sentences means: I think there's a problem with the hardware; It seems to be working fine now

No – we use this phrase to say that something is probably the case, but we are not fully sure.

P.10: 1. How can I help you? 2. keep seeing 3. It looks like 4. Hang on a sec 5. How about now?



Answer key

P.11

1. keeps 2. stopping and starting; potential causes: internet connection, problem with the mic, accidentally pressing mute

P.12 1. keeps cutting out 2. keeps disconnecting 3. keep having 4. keeps crashing

P.13 1. Try 2. try disconnecting 3. try turning

P.14 Try/Why don't you try/You should try... turning; calling; speaking; fixing; connecting

Additional Practice

S.20

Can you **turn off** your computer? / Can you **try turning off** your computer?

I can't **see** anything on my screen?

Could you **repeat** that?

Could you check your Wi-Fi connection please?

S. 21

1. keeps freezing 2. keeps connecting 3. keep having 4. keeps crashing



Summary

Vocabulary for describing and solving technical problems

- Verbs: crash, (dis)connect, cut out, go blank, to freeze
- Phrases: How about now? Give it a moment... Hang on a sec... Happy to help!

keep + -ing and try + -ing

- Use *keep + -ing* to talk about something that happens again and again: My audio **keeps cutting out**
- Use *try + -ing* to make suggestions: **Try disconnecting** and connecting again.

(It) looks like...

- We use this phrase to say that something *seems* to be the case (but we aren't fully sure): **Looks like** your screen is broken – you'll probably have to replace it.

Modals *can* and *could*

- Are useful for discussing problems and solutions: offering help, asking for help, expressing ability



Vocabulary

device

the latest version (of)

technical problem

tech support

How can I help you?

the Wi-Fi is down

(The software) keeps crashing

(The screen) is frozen

can/could

(It) looks like... / Looks like...

to restart

to cut out

to keep +ing

(The screen) went blank

How about now?

Happy to help!

Try + ing

Give it a moment

Hang on a sec

to (dis)connect



Vocabulary

internet provider

