

## Hospitality and Tourism

### Holiday reps

by Keith Harding

**Level:** Intermediate (to Upper Intermediate)

**Target age:** 16+

**Time needed:** 90 minutes

**Grammar / language objective:** Dealing with problems and difficulties, softening angry language

**Materials:** Worksheet 1: *Diary of a holiday rep.*  
Worksheet 2: *Softening angry language.*

#### 1. Warm-up

- Get students to brainstorm different types of resort, e.g. beach, ski, mountain, camping. Write them up as column headers.
- Then, in teams, they write down the names of jobs for people who work in each resort. They should try to think of as many as possible and be as inclusive as possible – e.g. include *cleaners* and *maintenance staff* as well as specialists like *ski instructors*.
- Write their answers on the board and award points to identify the winner.
- This not only serves as revision for tourism jobs but also hopefully will elicit the job of *holiday rep* or *resort rep*.

#### 2. Holiday reps: Duties and difficulties

- Discuss the different duties of holiday reps. For example, at a beach hotel/resort catering for package tours (families, etc.) these might include:

- *meeting people at the airport*  
- *taking people to the airport*  
- *giving information on the coach*  
- *arranging a welcome party*  
- *looking after children at mealtimes*  
- *organizing games for children*  
- *organizing sports for adults*

- How would the duties be different at other types of resort?
- In pairs, get students to think of the difficulties and problems that might occur for each of the duties. Do one as an example in class:

*Example: Meeting people at airport:*

- *flight is delayed*  
- *baggage gets lost*  
- *passenger is very ill / tired / angry*  
- *coach for transfer is late / breaks down*

- *microphone doesn't work*  
- *colleague phones in sick*

- Report back to whole class.
- In groups, discuss how you would deal with the difficult situations.
- Discuss other aspects of the job of holiday rep – the pros and the cons.

*For example:*

*Pros: working as part of a team, good location, free accommodation*

*Cons: seasonal only, long hours, early starts*

- Ask the class if they would like the job of holiday rep? Which type of resort would be best / worst?

#### 3. Reading: Diary of a holiday rep

- Tell students they are going to read an extract from a holiday rep's personal diary in which she talks about "changeover day". What do they think "changeover day" is, and what can go wrong? (Changeover day is the day when one group of tourists leave the resort and another arrive, so it involves transfers to and from the airport, checking rooms and facilities are clean and prepared, and briefing new arrivals.)

- Give out Worksheet 1.

- First, get students to read quickly to answer the "gist" questions in Task 1.

- Then they read again and complete Task 2. They can work in pairs.

- If you want you can do some extra work on phrasal verbs, using the five examples from the text.

#### 4. Being professional: Softening angry language

- Remind the class of Carly's problem with Anton, and how she was very angry and felt that she may have been unprofessional.
- Identify how she was and wasn't professional, i.e.

##### Professional

- She didn't voice her thoughts about the person who forgot his passport.
- She tried not to show her anger with the driver to the clients.
- She called for assistance from a colleague.

## Hospitality and Tourism

### Holiday reps

by Keith Harding

#### Unprofessional

- She lost her temper and got angry with the driver (had a "blazing row" which clients might have seen).
- The things she said to the driver made the situation worse.

- Introduce the idea that the language you use can also affect how angry you sound and that in tourism, there are many situations where you need to be diplomatic and professional with the words you use.
- Give out Worksheet 2 and refer students to section A – make sure they don't look at sections B and C, until they have thought about question 1.
- Work carefully through questions 2 and 3, giving other examples for each of the guidelines.
- To practise the softening language, get each student to think of another difficult situation or argument (e.g. annoyed with client for forgetting passport, responding to an angry complaining client) and to write down four or five angry statements like those used by Carly in section A.
- They then exchange their statements with a partner, who must soften them appropriately.
- Monitor and correct carefully. This exercise should be seen as controlled (written) practice for the freer (spoken) role-play that follows.
- Before you move from controlled to freer practice, you could work on modelling and practising appropriate intonation for some of the softening expressions.

#### 5. Difficult situations role-play

- Get the students in small groups to set up the role-play situation, by following this procedure:

(**Note:** it may be a good idea to switch to a different resort type – e.g. a beach resort rather than a ski resort)

1. Write down a problem (e.g. no water in the shower)
2. Write down why the guest is particularly angry (e.g. travelling all day, needs a shower)
3. Write down the rep's solution and plan of action (e.g. move client to a different room)

- Each group then passes their situation to another group to act out, using the softening language as appropriate.

- After each role-play, report back to the group who set it up.

## Hospitality and Tourism

### Holiday reps

by Keith Harding

## Diary of a holiday rep

### Changeover day

Changeover day, my favourite day – not!! I got up at 4 am and looked out of the window. Heavy snow. That's good news for the clients. They'll be happy and have lots to do. But for us it can mean long delays at the airport and a difficult coach journey back up to the resort.

However, things started well. All the clients returning home were at the pick-up points on time and the roads were fairly clear. But then, ... the first problem. I got on the microphone to speak to everyone and it didn't work! The driver, Anton, who I've never got on with, just said, "It doesn't work. You have to shout." I was furious with him but I didn't show it to the clients (at least I don't think I did).

So I spoke as loud as I could and gave instructions on the way down the mountain. It's a three-hour transfer and most people just want to sleep but I have to check things. Second problem: I was checking that everyone had their tickets and passports, when a voice from the back said, "Oh dear, I think I've left my passport in the hotel." I couldn't believe it, but I said to myself: Carly, just stay calm. "Are you sure, sir?" "Yes," he replied, "I remember forgetting it." (What does that mean, I thought!!). I said nothing but I was thinking: "What an idiot!"

We were only about ten minutes from the resort so I asked Anton to turn round. Guess what! "I can't turn round". Now, I knew for a fact that he could, there was plenty of space and I'd seen another driver do it only a week ago at exactly the same spot. But he just refused. Anton and I had a blazing row (standing outside the coach). I'm afraid I wasn't very diplomatic (or professional) and said things I shouldn't have said, which only made it worse.

I phoned back to Anna, one of the girls at the resort, and explained what had happened. She was great, and said she'd sort it out and get the passport from the hotel and bring it down in a taxi. I felt much better. I've got a great bunch of friends among the other reps. We're a good team – you have to be when you're a rep!

After that, things went much better. We were only held up for about 30 minutes and the clients all got their flight on time and seemed very satisfied. The incoming flight was actually early and we got everyone settled in the resort ahead of schedule. On the coach journey back I found I was on a different coach so didn't have to work with the miserable Anton.

And when I got back to my chalet and the rest of my wonderful team, I had even better news. Anton had been fired! Apparently Anna had reported the incident to the coach company and they said they'd had a lot of problems with him and "enough was enough". So, in the end it turned out to be one of my most enjoyable changeover days – and I got away with my unprofessional outburst!

### Task 1

1. What type of resort does Carly work in?
2. Does she usually enjoy changeover day?
3. Did she enjoy this particular changeover day? Why / Why not?

### Task 2

1. What two problems did Carly have?
2. How were they resolved?
3. Why did she think she might have been "unprofessional"?
4. Does Carly like her colleagues? How do you know?
5. Explain the meaning of the following phrasal verbs:
  - a. to get on with (*line 6*)
  - b. to sort something out (*line 20*)
  - c. to be held up (*line 23*)
  - d. to turn out (*line 29*)
  - e. to get away with (*line 30*)

## Hospitality and Tourism

### Holiday reps

by Keith Harding

## Softening angry language

### Section A

Here are some of the angry statements that Carly made during her argument with Anton.

1. Check the microphone again.
2. The idiot has left his passport back at the hotel.
3. I've got a problem and you must help me.
4. Turn the coach round immediately.
5. You're being totally unreasonable!
6. We've got to stop this argument.
7. What am I going to do?

**1. How could she have been more diplomatic and softened what she said?**

**2. Look at the softer expressions in Section B, and match them to their angry equivalents from Section A.**

**3. Look at Section C, which gives some language guidelines on how to be more diplomatic in difficult and problematic situations. Find sentences in B that are examples of the guidelines.**

### Section B

- a. Can I ask you a favour? Could you turn the coach round?
- b. You couldn't just check the microphone once more, could you?
- c. We seem to have a little problem, and I wonder if you can help sort it out.
- d. I'm sure we can sort out this little misunderstanding.
- e. The gentleman seems to have left his passport in his room.
- f. I know what I'll do – I'll phone the office for help.
- g. Don't you think you could be just a little bit more supportive?

### Section C

Guidelines on softening angry language:

- Avoid imperatives.
- Avoid terms of abuse (such as "you fool!").
- Avoid extreme adverbs like *totally*, *completely*.
- Don't be too direct.
- Use 'softer' words, like *seems*, *a little*.
- Use euphemisms (e.g. *misunderstanding* for *argument*, *situation* for *problem*).
- Always propose a solution.
- If it's a problem affecting both people, involve the other person in finding a solution.