

## Activity 5: Problems in the home (CEFR C1)

**Level:**  
CEFR C1

**Time:**  
45minutes

**Resources:**

- ✓ Handout
- ✓ Listening texts
- ✓ Dice – (If you don't have any, suggest students write the numbers 1 – 6 on small pieces of paper, fold them up and pick them randomly; or online dice can be found via google)

**Aims:**

- ✓ To develop skills and knowledge in speaking and listening at Level 2
- ✓ To explore vocabulary connected to L2 topics
- ✓ To develop students' ability to complain about problems in the house to a landlord
- ✓ To practise making and responding to suggestions, describing things, complaining, making requests in semi-formal situations (asking someone to do something).

**Exam task focus:** Component 1 Task 3

**Procedure:**

Problems in the home

1. Ask the students (SS) about any problems they have had in their homes. If possible, find images to illustrate possible problems in order to focus on the vocab. in Activity 1 e.g. leaking / dripping taps, blocked drains, damp walls etc. Handout  
Activity 1
  
2. Put SS into groups of 3/4. Give them a minute to look at the points in the game and check they understand how to play. If possible, give them a dice if not, see above for other suggestions. Highlight the prompts for suggestions of what they should talk about. After the activity, conduct whole class feedback. Focus on emerging vocabulary related to the topic and also sorting out the problems – this will prepare them for Activity 2.
  
3. Put SS into pairs and tell students to look at the suggested solutions to some of the problems. Highlight the fact that many of them are generic solutions. Tell them to match the solutions to the problems in Activity 1. Conduct whole class feedback. Handout  
Activity 1  
a & b

**Suggested answers:**

- a. a dripping or leaking pipe / shower / radiator / washing machine [a, b, e]
- b. a strange smell [a, e]
- c. a blocked drain / toilet / sink / basin [c]
- d. damp / cracked walls/ ceiling / floorboards [a, b]
- e. an infestation of moths / mice / rats / other insects [a, b, d]
- f. fridge / cooker / washing machine not working [b, e]

4. Tell them they are now going to practise describing problems in the house and making suggestions as to what to do about the problems with their partner. Tell them to take it in turns to describe the problem and make suggestions. Before they do the activity, highlight the language in the language box. Whilst they are doing the role play, monitor making a note of any good examples or things that don't sound right. Conduct whole class feedback focusing on what they did well and correcting any errors.
5. Ask SS to tell you the last time they complained about something. Find out what sort of situations they complain in. Is it normal to complain in their country? Explain that in the UK, even when complaining people try to be polite and stay calm to get better results! Tell students they are going to listen to 2 people complaining to their landlord. Tell them they need to listen to the problem, why it is a problem and what they want the landlord to do. Read the listening texts. If necessary, read twice.

Handout  
Activity 3  
a & b  
Listening  
texts

**Scenario 1**

Sorry to bother you but we have been having quite a few problems in the house recently. There seems to be a problem with the central heating. We haven't had any hot water for a few days so we've had to boil kettles to wash do the washing up and to wash ourselves. It's getting colder so we do need this to be sorted soon because the house is getting colder. Could you get someone in to take a look at it?

**Scenario 2**

I'm afraid we've been having a lot of problems with the people in the flat below and we'd really like you to do something about it. They are really noisy a lot of time. Sometimes it's loud music or television and sometimes it's the children screaming and shouting. Also, they've started leaving their rubbish to pile up in the hall outside their flat. It smells, it's unhygienic and we are worried that it will attract mice or rats. We'd really appreciate it if you could speak to them quickly before it gets worse.

6. Conduct whole class feedback.

**Suggested answers:**

**Scenario 1**

The central heating has stopped working – no hot water. It's getting colder so want the landlord to get someone in to look at it.

**Scenario 2**

Problems with neighbours in the downstairs flat – noisy and leave rubbish in the hallway. Worried about mice or rats. Want landlord to speak to them before the situation gets worse.

7. Find out what sort of accommodation the students live in – flats, houses etc. Do they rent? Are they renting from the council or private landlords (only ask this if you know the class reasonably well and feel they would be comfortable talking about it). Tell them they are going to do a roleplay – playing a landlord and tenant. Explain the scenario and tell them to take it in turns to play the different roles. Focus on the language in the language box before they do the task.

8. Whilst they are doing the role play, monitor making a note of any good examples or things that don't sound right. Conduct whole class feedback focusing on what they did well and correcting any errors.
  
9. Focus SS attention on the exam box at the bottom of the handout to explain how the lesson has helped to prepare them for Task 1 of the Trinity Level 2 Skills for Life Speaking exam.

## Handout Activity: Problems in the home

### Activity 1: Problems around the house

**Roll a dice and talk about the subject you land on. Use the questions to give you some ideas of what to talk about.**

- Have you ever had this problem in your home either in your country or in the UK?
- If yes, what did you do about it? If not, what would you do if it happened to you?
- If you couldn't do anything about it yourself, who could you get to help? Someone in your household? Someone else?

<p><b>1</b> a dripping or leaking pipe / shower / radiator / washing machine</p>		<p><b>2</b> a strange smell</p>
	<p><b>3</b> a blocked drain / toilet / sink / basin</p>	
<p><b>4</b> damp / cracked walls/ ceiling / floorboards</p>		<p><b>5</b> an infestation of moths / mice / rats / other insects</p>
	<p><b>6</b> fridge / cooker / washing machine not working</p>	

images from [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

**Activity 2: Sorting out problems around the home**

**a Look at some suggestions for sorting out the problems in Activity 1. Match them with the problems.**

- a You need to find out where the problem is coming from.
- b It might be worth getting someone /a plumber / an electrician / a pest control company to look at it.
- c Have you tried pouring bleach down it?
- d What about putting down some mousetraps?
- e Have you checked the washers / fuse / drains?

**b Work with a partner. Choose one or more of the situations from Activity 1. Take it in turns to tell your partner about the problem / problems you are having. Your partner should make suggestions as to what you could do. Use some of the language from the language box.**

**Language Box: Making and responding to suggestions**

**Making suggestions**

You need to find out where / who / what / when  
*You need to find out where the problem is coming from.*  
It might be worth + -ing  
*It might be worth getting a plumber to look at it.*  
Have you tried + -ing  
*Have you tried pouring bleach down it?*  
What about + -ing  
*What about putting down some mousetraps?*

**Responding to suggestions**

That's a great idea.  
I've already tried that. Any other suggestions?  
That didn't work. I need to try something else.

## Activity 3: Complaining to a landlord

### Cultural Note

In the UK, people do complain when they are not happy with things but generally use softening phrases when complaining. They may even apologise and start by saying 'Sorry' 'I'm afraid ...' or 'Excuse me but ...'. The idea behind this is that if you are polite, you are more likely to get the solution you want. Is this the same or different where you come from?

### a Listen to two people complaining to their landlord.

- What's the problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- What do they want the landlord to do?

### Language Box: Complaining

#### Introducing the complaint

Sorry to bother you but ...

*Sorry to bother you but we have been having quite a few problems with ...*

I'm afraid ...

*I'm afraid we've been having a lot of problems with*

#### Describing the problem

There seems to be a problem with ...

*There seems to be a problem with the central heating*

#### Saying what you want the person to do

We'd really like you to ...

*e.g. We'd really like you to do something about it*

We'd really appreciate it if you could + bare infinitive

*e.g. We'd really appreciate it if you could speak to them*

Could you + bare infinitive

*e.g. Could you get a plumber to come and look at it?*

#### Responding to complaints

I'll see what I can do

I'm very busy at the moment, I'll try to do something about it when I have time

Have you tried to sort it out yourself?

**b You are a tenant. You have recently been having some problems with your home. Make a list of problems. Work with a partner to take it in turns to be the landlord and tenant. Explain your problem/s to the landlord, say why it is a problem and what you want the landlord to do.**

### Exam Hint

In Task 3 of the Level 2 Skills for Life exam, you will take part in a role play with the examiner. During the role play you will need to respond to complaints and criticisms in a wide range of formal and social exchanges.

You will need to demonstrate that you can understand and use specific communicative functions such as *describing things, making and responding to suggestions, complaining, making requests in semi formal situations (asking someone to do something)*. You have practised doing this in this lesson.