



Helping Learners Call Tech Support

One support document that will differ from the support that you would include in a face-to-face classroom, and that you may want to include in an online setting, is a resource to help your learners call for technical help.

As learners visit the online space on their own time, they may encounter unfamiliarity and even some technical problems with accessing the course space or some of its components. Unlike in a classroom where learners can raise their hands to ask a question and receive a solution right away, this type of immediate feedback from an instructor will likely not be possible in an online space. The best option for learners who require a solution to a technical problem will be the technical help services that many institutions have in place to support their learning management system or other platforms.

While using language in an authentic experience, like calling technical support, can be a valuable learning opportunity, it can also be a frustrating experience for language learners. Your learners will benefit if you provide scaffolding to help them converse with technical support, and in turn, they will feel more confident about the online space and about learning a language through online learning.

“Your learners will benefit if you provide scaffolding to help them converse with technical support.”

On the next page is a text document that you can distribute to your learners to help them with calling technical support. This information is also presented in video.



Calling Tech Support

At times you may need to call technical support to help you with technology used for learning. Describing technical problems in English can be challenging, but it is also a great opportunity to use and practice your language skills. Here are a few tips to help you when calling tech support.

1. KNOW THE PROBLEM

Know the problem before you call. Practice how to describe the problem exactly, and write it down if you need to.

2. STATE THE PROBLEM DIRECTLY

Try to be concise and exact in stating the problem. Some expressions that may be useful are:

- I can't...
- My computer won't...

Examples:

- I can't log into my account.
- I can't access the course material.
- My computer won't let me download the assignment.

3. BE AT YOUR SCREEN

If possible, have your computer screen open and at the point where you are experiencing problems. Often, technical support will be able to guide you through smaller problems as you talk. Also, they may ask you to take screenshots and send them by email.

4. HAVE SMALL DETAILS READY

After you have stated the problem concisely, the tech support staff may ask you for additional details. How long has the problem been occurring? Has the problem ever happened before? Which browser are you using?

5. ASK TO SLOW DOWN OR REPEAT

When needed, ask the tech support staff to slow down or to repeat what they have said. Tech support workers are not language teachers, and they may not have experience talking to language learners. It is your responsibility to ask them to slow down and repeat. Here are some phrases you can use:

- Sorry, could you please repeat that again?
- Could you please say that a bit slower? I'm having trouble keeping up.
- What does _____ mean?
- What do you mean by _____?



6. CLARIFY THE NEXT STEPS

At the end of the call, ask for clarification about the next steps. An excellent way to do this is to repeat back what you understand will happen next. For example:

- Ok, just to make sure I understand everything – you are going to send me an email, and then I should wait for 3 days.
- Then end by asking “Is this correct?”

Below is an example dialog between a tech support staff and a language learner. Read the dialog and [listen to the audio](#) provided.

Tech Support Staff (T): Tech Support. Can you please hold for a moment? *click*

Learner (L): Ok...uh...

T: *click* Hi. Thanks for holding. What course are you calling about?

L: Oh, I'm in the ESL200 course. My teacher is Jane.

T: Jane? Ah, what's her last name?

L: Oh, sorry. It's Smith.

T: Ok. And what's the problem?

L: I'm logged into the course and my computer won't download the course assignments. I can't access the course content.

T: Ok. Let me look into that....ESL200, right?

L: Yes.

T: And you say that you are logged in?

L: Yes, correct.

T: What files are they?

L: Uh, I'm sorry could you say that a bit slower? I'm having trouble keeping up. English isn't my first language.

T: Oh, right. Sorry. What type of files are the course assignments?

L: I think they're PDF files. This is the first time this has happened to me before, I've been able to download PDFs easily in the past, but not in this course.

T: Ok. What happens when you try and download the PDF?

L: Nothing really. A banner comes across the top of my screen and just says “Error, unable to download.”

T: Ok. Are you at your computer now? Can you try right-clicking on the download file?



- L: I'm sorry, could you say that again?
- T: Oh, sorry. Try right-clicking on the file.
- L: Ok. I right-clicked and there are a few options....
- T: Can you see where it says "Save as"?
- L: Yes.
- T: Ok. Try selecting "Save as" and save it to your computer. Then you can open the PDF from your own computer.
- L: Ok. One moment...Oh, hey, it worked. Thanks very much.
- T: No problem. You should send an email to your instructor about this. Likely other people have had the same problem. If you find any more problems, call us back.
- L: Ok. Thanks again. Oh, and just to make sure – when I need to download a file I should right-click and use the "Save as" option?
- T: Yes, that's right.
- L: And I should also let my instructor know about this problem? Can I have your name, so I can let them know who to contact?
- T: Yeah, it would be best to send her a short email. I'm Dave. Is there anything else I can help you with today?
- L: No, that's great. Thank you for your help.
- T: Ok. Have a great day. Bye.
- L: Bye.

