

Resolving a Billing Issue with a Utility Company

CEFR C1 Roleplay



1. Warm-up Discussion Questions:

1. What types of billing issues have you experienced or heard about with utility companies?
2. How do you typically go about resolving billing issues with a service provider?
3. What are some common reasons a bill might be higher than expected?
4. How can customers make sure they're being charged correctly for their utilities?
5. What information is essential to have on hand when calling a company about a billing issue?
6. What are some effective ways to communicate dissatisfaction without escalating the situation?

2. Example Conversation: Resolving a Billing Issue with a Utility Company

Student A (Customer Service Representative): "Hello, thank you for calling Utility Services. How may I assist you today?"

Student B (Customer): "Hi, I'm calling because I noticed my latest electricity bill is unusually high. I believe there may be an error."

Student A: "I'm sorry to hear that. Let's look into it. Could you please provide me with your account number to locate your information?"

Student B: "Certainly, it's 12345678. I'd like to understand why this bill is almost double what I normally pay."

Student A: "Thank you. I see the account now. From what I can tell, your usage did go up significantly last month. Have there been any changes in your household?"

Student B: "Not that I'm aware of. We've been using the same appliances as always, and no one has been home more than usual."

Student A: "I understand. Sometimes meter readings can be estimated if an actual reading wasn't taken. This could lead to temporary spikes. Would you like me to check for any estimated readings?"

Student B: "Yes, please. That would help clarify things."

Student A: "Alright, it looks like last month's reading was indeed estimated. I can arrange for an actual reading to be taken to adjust the charges if needed."

Student B: "That sounds fair. Will I receive a revised bill if the reading shows a lower usage?"

Student A: "Yes, if the new reading reflects a lower amount, we'll issue a corrected bill. This may take a few days, though."

Student B: "I appreciate that. Can I also arrange for actual readings in the future to avoid this happening again?"

Student A: "Certainly. We can schedule regular readings to ensure accuracy. Thank you for your patience, and we'll get this resolved as soon as possible."

Student B: "Thank you for helping me sort this out. I'll wait for the revised bill."

3. Background:

You recently received a utility bill that is much higher than usual, and you suspect there may be an error. You contact customer service to investigate the charges and try to resolve the issue. Your goal is to understand why the bill is so high and to seek an adjustment if there has been a mistake. You may need to ask about specific charges, meter readings, and possible solutions to prevent this from happening again.

4. Instructions:

Student A (Customer Service Representative):

You are a customer service representative for a utility company. A customer has contacted you regarding a high bill and believes there might be an error. Be helpful and courteous, and explain possible reasons for the high charges, such as estimated meter readings. Offer solutions, such as arranging for an actual reading or issuing a revised bill if an error is confirmed.

Student B (Customer):

You are a customer who has received an unexpectedly high utility bill and suspects there is a mistake. You call the utility company's customer service line to inquire about the charges and request clarification. Ask questions about the bill details and push for an adjustment if necessary. Also, consider asking for steps to avoid similar issues in the future.

5. Vocabulary List:

billing issue, customer service, estimated reading, meter reading, actual reading, charges, adjustment, revise, account number, temporary spike