

WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

Taking it back

One of the hardest things to do in any language is complain. Some things present insurmountable barriers – trying to get hold of Alice to complain about a non-existent Broadband connection, for instance – in fact almost anything involving a phone call, confronted as one is by a machine that seems programmed to frustrate you.

Taking things back to the shop involves talking about the past.

J'ai acheté ce grille-pain la semaine dernière = I bought this toaster last week.

J'ai perdu le ticket de caisse = I've lost the till slip (give up hope now!)

About the condition things were in –

Quand je l'ai ouvert c'était cassé = When I opened it it was broken.

And about the present –

Il ne marche pas comme il faut = It doesn't work properly.

Il manque un bouton = it's missing a knob.

Il manque des pièces = There are bits missing.

Il n'est pas en bon état = it's not in good condition.

C'est de la mauvaise couleur = it's the wrong colour.

Ce n'est pas de la bonne taille. = not the right size.

Il est déjà en panne = it's already broken down.

Saying what you want as an outcome is important.

Je voudrais/veux un remplacement = I want a replacement. J

e voudrais/veux être remboursé = I want a refund.

Don't be fobbed off with an "avoir" – a credit note - unless it's your fault.

Je ne veux pas d'avoir je veux un remboursement. A refund is probably worth waiting for (and you'll find you do have to wait!) I have put both "voudrais" and "veux" for polite/insistant depending how you are feeling.

Est-ce que je peux l'échanger? = Can I change it?

Est-ce que vous avez un autre? = Have you got another one.

If you are feeling brave you can quote what they said back at them – Vous avez dit que mon grille-pain *marcherait* parfaitement, que les piles *dureraient* plusieurs heures, que c'était tres costaud et resisterait aux chocs: You said my toaster would work perfectly, that the batteries would last several hours, that it was very strong and would stand up to knocks. Etc What he said was This will be perfect in every way (future) When you quote it has to one step back into the past so you use the Conditional, putting past endings on a future stem. (like je voudrais = I would like). You may remember an earlier Note about the past. The imperfect endings all sound like "AY" unless you are saying Nous or Vous. In shorthand, the conditional always seems to end in "RAY". So you get "Marsheray, Dew-ra-ray, rayzeesteray"

Some shops are very good at dealing with these complaints, others less so. If you want to vent your anger, use words like C'est Impossible (AM-PossEEbla) ! C'est Inacceptable (EENaxseptAabla) Vous rigolez! (REEGOLAY) = you are joking! Ce n'est pas vrai (SAY PA VRAY) By the way you can't say these words quietly!

Don't forget the body language either. Be loud enough for others to hear and if all else fails lean on the counter in a way that says you're not going away until it's sorted. You may be there for a while, but it nearly always works.