

How to discuss problems

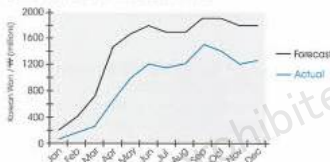
In this lesson you will learn language for talking about problems.

Starter

- 1 Have you ever bought any clothes online? Were you satisfied with them?
- 2 Look at the sentences about online ordering below. Can you explain the words in bold?
 - 1 If you want to see the products in more detail, you can **zoom in** here.
 - 2 I spent a lot of time **browsing** online before I found the right furniture for our office.
 - 3 Our **conversion rate** is low – a lot of people visit our website, but not many people sign up for our newsletter.
 - 4 We invested in a website **traffic report** so that we would know how many hits our website received and know what they were looking at.
 - 5 If you go to our website, you can visit your chosen destination **virtually** before you book your holiday.

Expressions

- 1 Chongun Clothing, a successful fashion retailer in South Korea, launched an e-store a year ago. Look at the following graph and describe their actual and forecast sales figures. What do you think could be the reasons behind these results?



- 2 Listen to the extract from a management meeting where Chongun employees discuss the sales problem. Mark the sentences true (T) or false (F).
 - 1 People spend a lot of time on the website but don't buy very much.
 - 2 Grace thinks customers are confident about buying online.
 - 3 It would be cost-effective to add a virtual trying-on feature.
 - 4 Chongun didn't do any research before launching online sales.
 - 5 The problem lies with the users' technology not Chongun's website.

Speaking

- 1 Discuss the following options for solving the problem in Expressions. What would be the possible consequences of each one? Which is the best solution?
 - Add a virtual trying-on feature to the website.
 - Stop selling online and concentrate on in-store sales.
 - Employ a consultancy company to advise on how to deal with the problem.
 - Close down stores and only sell online.
 - Survey your customers in stores to find out what they think about online clothes shopping.
 - Downgrade your website so that it is faster to load on all operating systems.

Language box

Even if shows that although something may happen, the result won't change:

I can't afford it **even if** it's discounted. (= the price may change, but I still can't pay for it)

Even if we gave him a pay rise, he'll still leave the company. (= the pay rise makes no difference – he won't change his decision to leave)

Even though = despite a situation:

I can't afford it **even though** it's discounted. (= the discount makes no difference)

Even though we gave him a pay rise, he left the company. (= the pay rise changed nothing)

Hint

The clause with a conditional marker (even if, providing, etc.) can go before or after the main clause. Note the use of the comma:

Unless we take a taxi, we won't get to the airport in time.
We won't get to the airport in time unless we take a taxi.

- 11.1 3 Put the words from the meeting in the correct order. Then listen again to check your answers.

- 1 behind / can / only / we / know / deal / problem / we / with / if / it / this / what's.
 - 2 usability / could / problem / lie / the / the / website / with / of / the.
 - 3 way / customers / in / we / a / case / of / reassuring / need / that.
 - 4 money / there's / and / spending / features / no / time / developing / new / point.
 - 5 we / initial / should / our / mind / study / in / bear / market.
 - 6 could / we / a / say / problem / technology / I'd / have / the / with.
 - 7 that / something / there / could / be / in.
- 4 Read this extract from the conversation. What does *it's all very well* mean?

Son-Do It's all very well having a high-tech website with lots of flash and video images, but unless people can navigate it quickly, they're not going to bother to order.

Unless = except if:

People won't know about the new product unless we advertise it.

Unless you pay by the end of the month, we'll be obliged to cancel the contract.

Only if emphasizes a special condition:

We can only exchange goods if you have a receipt. (= in this one situation)

Whether can be used in place of if when there are two or more options:

I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

Writing

- 1 Look at the picture, which illustrates a colleague's problem. They have opened a consignment of new clothing stock to discover a number of faults. Write an email to them giving some advice on dealing with the problem.



Look

Look at listening script 11.1 on page 126. Find more examples of *even if*, *even though*, *unless*, *only if*, and *whether*.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

3 useful phrases from this lesson

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| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

Things to remember

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