

How to give technical instructions

In this lesson you will learn how to help someone who is having problems using equipment.

Starter

- 1 Are you the kind of person who loves learning how to use a new gadget – or the kind that prefers to have things explained to them?
- 2 Look at the pictures of the three items of equipment. Think of five key words per item which you would need in instructing someone how to use them. Are any of the words the same between items?



Expressions

- 1 Three people are getting help with some equipment. Listen and find out what the equipment is and what they learn to do.
- 2 In 1–4 below, the words from two separate instructions from the dialogues have been mixed together. Put the words in the correct order to find the original instructions. In each case you have been given the first words.

1 about / 'Options' / for / five / them / seconds / the / menu / down

Hold _____

Find _____

2 tick / the / third / the / table / card / the / on / box

Place _____

Click _____

3 edge / smoothly / the / the / front / 'Administrator' / of / the / over / the / card / PDA / button

Roll _____

Choose _____

4 back / when / me / what / it / in / get / exactly / happens / you

Bring _____

Tell _____

Speaking

- 1 Take out an item from your bag or pocket (e.g. your mobile, a laptop, a calculator, a music player) and pass it to your teacher. Explain carefully how to use it. (To make it more challenging, go to another room and give the instructions by phone or sit back to back.)

Language box

If you *happen to do something*, you do it by chance without planning:

I happened to see their chief negotiator in the cafe.

The expression *I happen to* is used with verbs like *know, believe, consider*, etc. to give a strong personal opinion:

I happen to think that this policy is completely misguided.

That happens to be ... and *As it happens* are used to give contrasting, surprising, or shocking information. They are often used as a reply when you are upset or want to disagree:

A What an ugly car.

B That happens to be mine.

A As usual, no one has a copy of the agenda.

B As if happens, I do.

Hint

Use **only** (and stress it!) to emphasize how surprisingly lucky someone has been.
Would you believe his luck? He **only** got promoted!
She must have written a good tender.
She **only** won the whole contract!

Writing

- 1 Choose one piece of office equipment that you regularly use (e.g. a photocopier, a scanner, an electronic hole punch). Write a notice to place near the equipment telling users what to do if they have three common problems (e.g. for a photocopier: a paper jam, running out of toner, wrong size zoom).



Look

Look at listening scripts 30.1–30.3 on pages 134–135.
Find more examples of *happen*.

- 30.1–30.3
- 3 Listen again to check your answers. Do you hear any other imperative verbs in the dialogues?
- 4 Match the sentences (1–8) with the functions (a–h).
- 1 You're not in a tunnel, are you?
 - 2 Well, I suggest you do a system reset.
 - 3 It's got a red circle on it.
 - 4 It'll beep and the system will reboot.
 - 5 And the card should appear on screen.
 - 6 Tell me what you see after you turn it on.
 - 7 That's not a big problem.
 - 8 Now, instead of selecting Robert's name from the list, choose the 'Administrator' button.
- a Telling the user to do something in a different way from previously
b Requesting the user to describe what happens or what they see
c Explaining what the user will see if an action has worked correctly
d Finding out the context or situation
e Reassuring the user
f Offering a solution that often helps
g Explaining how to recognize something
h Explaining what the user will hear if an action has worked correctly

Whatever happens means 'Although the outcome is unpredictable, it is vital that ...':

Whatever happens, make sure they sign the agreement today.

Use *Whatever happened to ...* to ask about a person that you haven't heard of for a long time:

Whatever happened to Juan? You know – he used to be head of marketing.

These things happen is a fixed expression that means 'Don't worry about it – because there is nothing you can do about it':

- A I thought my report was quite good – but she said I need to rewrite half of it.
B These things happen!

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

- 1 1
- 2 2
- 3 3

Things to remember

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