

The Savvy Shopper: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, learners will transition from being passive buyers to "Power Shoppers." They will learn the legal and ethical framework that protects consumers and the responsibilities that come with those protections. By the end, they will know how to advocate for themselves when a product or service fails to meet expectations.

Materials Needed

- Access to the internet (for quick research)
- A recent receipt (from a grocery store, online order, or clothing shop)
- A product with packaging (e.g., a cereal box, a toy, or a tech gadget box)
- Paper and pen or a digital document for drafting
- "The Scenario Cards" (included in the lesson body)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the four core Consumer Rights (Safety, Information, Choice, and Being Heard).
- Explain the responsibilities a consumer has before and after a purchase.
- Analyze a real-world scenario to determine which consumer rights were violated.
- Draft a professional complaint letter to resolve a consumer dispute effectively.

1. The Hook: The "Bait and Switch" (5 Minutes)

Scenario: You've been saving your birthday money for a specific pair of sneakers you saw online. The ad says they are "genuine leather" and "indestructible." You pay \$120. When they arrive, they are plastic, the logo is peeling, and the sole falls off on your first walk. You email the company, and they reply: *"Sorry, no refunds. You should have read the fine print."*

Discussion Question: Does that feel fair? Does "no refunds" mean the company can sell you a broken product? (Spoiler: No, it doesn't! Today, we're going to find out why.)

2. Instruction: The Consumer Bill of Rights (15 Minutes)

The "I Do" Model

Back in 1962, President John F. Kennedy introduced the "Consumer Bill of Rights." It has since expanded, but these four are your foundation:

1. **The Right to Safety:** Products shouldn't hurt you if used correctly. (e.g., A phone shouldn't explode in your pocket).
2. **The Right to be Informed:** You have the right to honest advertising and clear labels. (e.g., Nutrition facts on food or "made of 100% polyester" on a shirt).
3. **The Right to Choose:** You should have options at different price points. Monopolies (where only one company sells a thing) are generally bad for consumers.
4. **The Right to be Heard:** If something goes wrong, you have the right to complain and have that complaint addressed fairly.

The Flip Side: Consumer Responsibilities

Rights come with duties! To be a "Power Shopper," you must:

- **The Responsibility to Research:** Read reviews and compare prices before buying.
- **The Responsibility to Follow Instructions:** If the tag says "Dry Clean Only" and you melt the shirt in your dryer, that's on you!
- **The Responsibility to Keep Records:** No receipt? No proof of purchase. No proof? No refund.

3. Guided Practice: "Truth or Hype?" (15 Minutes)

The "We Do" Model

Let's look at your product packaging or a famous ad online. Look for these "Fine Print" traps:

- **The Asterisk (*):** What is the tiny text at the bottom saying? Does it cancel out the big headline?
- **"Results Not Typical":** Why would a company say this? (It protects them from the Right to be Informed if their product doesn't work for everyone).
- **The Receipt Audit:** Look at your receipt. Does it list the "Return Policy"? Usually, you have 14, 30, or 90 days. If you wait until Day 91, you've failed your responsibility.

Task: Find one "limit" on your product or receipt (e.g., "Non-refundable," "Batteries not included," or "Warranty valid for 1 year"). How does this affect your rights?

4. Application: The "Complaint Letter" Challenge (20 Minutes)

The "You Do" Model

Pick one of the following scenarios. Your job is to write a short, professional email to the company. To be successful, you must mention **which right** was violated and **what you want** (a refund, a replacement, or a repair).

Scenario A: You bought a gaming headset that advertised "Universal Compatibility." It doesn't work with your console, even though the console is listed on the box.

Scenario B: You ordered a "Giant 5-foot Teddy Bear" for your sibling's birthday. A package arrived with a bear that is 5 inches tall. The company says you "got what you paid for."

Scenario C: You bought a new bike. On the third ride, the brakes snapped (you were using them

normally). The store says "all bike sales are final once ridden."

Success Criteria for your letter:

- [] Polite and professional tone (No "u guys r scammers!!")
- [] Clear description of the problem.
- [] Mention of the specific Consumer Right (e.g., "Right to be Informed" or "Right to Safety").
- [] Proposed solution (What do you want them to do?).

5. Conclusion: Recap & Reflection (5 Minutes)

What we learned today:

- You have the legal **Right** to safe products and honest info.
- You have the **Responsibility** to be an informed buyer and keep your receipts.
- Complaining effectively isn't about being "Karen"—it's about being professional and firm about your rights.

Exit Question: What is one thing you will check the next time you buy something over \$20? (Example: The return policy, the online reviews, or the warranty).

Assessment Methods

- **Formative (During lesson):** Participation in the "Truth or Hype" audit and identifying fine print.
- **Summative (End of lesson):** The "Complaint Letter." Evaluate based on the Success Criteria provided in Section 4.

Differentiation & Adaptability

- **For the Tech-Savvy:** Instead of writing a letter, create a 60-second "Consumer PSA" video for TikTok or YouTube explaining one of the rights.
- **For the Struggling Learner:** Use a "fill-in-the-blank" template for the complaint letter to scaffold the formal language.
- **Advanced Extension:** Research the "Right to Repair" movement. Should companies like Apple or John Deere be required to let you fix your own devices? How does this connect to the "Right to Choose"?