Activity Type
Listening and speaking activity, pairwork

Language Focus
Complaining

Aim
To soften complaints using 'not very + positive adjective' and 'rather + negative adjective'.

Preparation
Make one copy of the cards for each pair of students and cut as indicated. Keep the white and grey cards separate.

Level
Intermediate (B1)

Time
25 minutes

Introduction
In this making complaints activity, students learn how to soften complaints.

Procedure
Write the following on the board:

Excuse me, but ... is incredibly slow!

Ask the class to suggest noun phrases that could complete the sentence.

Example: Excuse me, but this computer is incredibly slow.

Explain how complaints can be softened by using 'not very + positive adjective' (e.g. not very fast) or 'rather + negative adjective' (e.g. rather slow)

Examples: Excuse me, but this computer is not very fast.

Excuse me, but this computer is rather slow.

Next, divide the students into pairs (A and B).

Give Student A a set of white cards (strong adverb and adjective combinations) and Student B a set of grey cards (positive and negative adjectives).

Review the adverbs and adjectives on the cards.

Tell the students to shuffle their set of cards and place them face down in a pile in front of them.

Student B takes the top nine cards from his/her pile and places them face up on the table in a three by three square.

Student A takes the top card from his/her pile and makes a complaint using the vocabulary on the card.

If Student B has an adjective in their square that can be used to soften the complaint, they say the softened complaint and turn the card over.

Student A then takes another card and the process is repeated.

When Student B has three cards turned over in a row (vertically, horizontally or diagonally), the students change roles.

Have the students play several rounds to practice the language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>incredibly slow</th>
<th>extremely rude</th>
<th>extremely expensive</th>
<th>incredibly greedy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deeply offensive</td>
<td>totally useless</td>
<td>unbearably hot</td>
<td>absolutely freezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absolutely disgusting</td>
<td>incredibly boring</td>
<td>downright lazy</td>
<td>absolutely filthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absolutely horrible</td>
<td>unbelievably stupid</td>
<td>incredibly ignorant</td>
<td>absolutely terrifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>impolite</td>
<td>costly</td>
<td>hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insulting</td>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>cool</td>
<td>cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nice</td>
<td>interesting</td>
<td>hardworking</td>
<td>dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
<td>knowledgeable</td>
<td>frightening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>