

Blank Screen

(Call centres are inundated with calls from difficult customers. Here's a real transcript of a conversation from one of those very people.)

Support: Ridge Halt computer assistance; may I help you?

Customer: Yes, well, I'm having trouble with Word.

Support: What sort of trouble?

Customer: Well, I was typing and all of a sudden the words went away.

Support: Went away?

Customer: They disappeared.

Support: Hmm. So what does your screen look like now?

Customer: Nothing.

Support: Nothing?

Customer: It's blank; it won't accept anything when I type.

Support: Are you still in Word, or did you get out?

Customer: How do I tell?

Support: Never mind. Can you move the cursor around on the screen?

Customer: There isn't any cursor? I told you, there's nothing.

Support: Is the monitor switched on?

Customer: What's the monitor?

Support: It's the thing with the screen on it that looks like a TV. Does it have a little light that tells you when it's on?

Customer: I don't know.

Support: Well, then look on the back of the monitor and find where the power cord goes into it. Can you see that?

Customer: ... Yes, I think so.

Support: Great! Follow the cord to the plug, and tell me if it's plugged into the wall.

Customer: ... Yes, it is.

Support: Follow the other cable from the back of the monitor, and tell me if it's plugged securely into the back of your computer.

Customer: I can't get to it? It's too difficult.

Support: Uh huh. Well, can you see if it is?

Customer: No.

Support: Move your desk and try and see.

Customer: Oh, no, you don't understand, I can't see it because it's dark.

Support: Dark?

Customer: Yes. The office light is off, and the only light I have is coming in from the window.

Support: Well, turn on the office light then.

Customer: I can't.

Support: No? Why not?

Customer: Because there's a power cut.