Guide 1: Find a customer problem, need, or want

Your goal

Find a group of people with a problem, need, or want that a business could address.

Start with people and their daily lives. You do not need to choose a product yet. If you already have a product idea, ask: “Who might use this? Why?”

What to produce

Write a short description that identifies:

- A potential customer: a person or group who might buy a good or service.
- That customer's problem, need, or want.

Use paper or your own document. Follow your teacher's submission instructions. The steps and sentence starters below are help, not extra project requirements.

Key terms

- **Customer:** a person or organisation that buys a good or service. A potential customer might buy it in the future.
- **Problem:** a difficulty someone experiences.
- **Need:** something a person requires.
- **Want:** something a person would like to have or experience.

A good is a physical item. A service is work done for someone.

The customer and the user can be different. A parent might buy a school bag that a child uses. At this stage, identify who has the problem, need, or want. If someone else might pay, note that too.

You do not have to decide whether every idea is only a problem, a need, or a want. Focus on the person's experience.

Step 1: Look at daily life

Think about school, home, travel, hobbies, or your community.

Ask yourself:

- What is difficult, slow, or frustrating?
- What do people need but find hard to get?
- What would people like to enjoy or do differently?

Write down a few possibilities. You can start with your own experience. Other people may have different experiences.

You do not need internet research or interviews for this guide. Do not record other people's names or private details.

Step 2: Choose a potential customer

Choose one possibility. Describe the people who might share it.

“Everyone” is too broad to guide your next steps. “Students who move between classrooms” gives you a clearer starting group.

Choose a group you can learn about. You can change this group later.

Step 3: Describe the experience

Explain what happens, when it happens, and why it might matter.

For a problem, describe the difficulty. For a want, describe the experience the person would like. A business idea does not have to solve a serious problem.

Example: Before Ready Pouch

Ready Pouch is our fictional example business. Here, we explore a possible customer problem before choosing a product.

We will follow its decisions through the project. This example is a starting assumption, not a research finding.

Product idea: “I want to sell pencil pouches.”

This names something to sell. It does not explain who might need it or why.

Customer problem: “Some students who move between classrooms may have difficulty finding loose pens in their bags when a lesson starts. This could delay their work.”

This gives us:

- **Who:** students who move between classrooms.
- **What and when:** difficulty finding pens when a lesson starts.
- **Why it could matter:** a delay in starting work.

We still need to check whether other students experience this. We do not yet know whether they would buy a pouch or whether a pouch would help.

Step 4: Separate what you know from what you assume

An **assumption** is something you think is true but have not checked.

“I could not find my pen yesterday” describes your own experience. “Many students have this problem” is a wider claim that needs evidence.

Note what led you to your idea and what you still need to check. Do not invent interviews, numbers, or customer comments.

Your turn

Write your description. Use these questions to help:

1. Who might have this problem, need, or want?
2. What happens, or what would they like? In what situation?
3. Why might this matter to them?
4. What led you to this idea? What is still unknown?

If you need help starting, choose a sentence starter:

Problem or difficulty:

“[Group] may find it difficult to [action] when [situation]. This matters because [possible effect].”

Need or want:

“[Group] may need or want [item, service, or experience] when [situation], because [reason].”

For example: “Students who enjoy drawing may want a place to share their work after school because they enjoy meeting other people with the same interest.” This is another untested idea, not a Ready Pouch finding.

You can use your own wording. There is no set word count in this guide.

Check your work

- I identified a potential customer group.
- I described a problem, need, or want in a clear situation.
- I explained why it might matter.
- My description explains the customer's experience, not only what I want to sell.
- I kept assumptions separate from things I know.

Save your description with your project work. It is a starting point that you can revise.

Next: Understand the market

In Unit 1, Task 2, you will consider competition and outside factors that could affect your idea. Customer interviews follow in Task 3.

Independent guidance based on the AP Business with Personal Finance CED, printed pages 151-152. This is not an official College Board resource.