

C. Letters of Complaint

- 1** Read the table below, then listen to the cassette and fill in the missing information. What complaints did the client make? Why? What action did she ask to be taken?



Complaint

- I stayed in a huge multi-storey
- The resort was with tourists.
- The beach was a bus ride away.

Justification (but I had been told that ...)

- I would be staying in a family-run house.
 The resort was and unspoilt.
 The beach was a walk away.

- Letters of complaint are normally written in a formal style.
- Mild or strong language can be used depending on the feelings of the writer or the seriousness of the complaint, but abusive language must never be used.
 e.g. **Mild Complaint:** *I am writing to complain about a damaged videotape I bought at your shop.
 I hope you will deal with this matter/resolve this matter quickly.*
Strong Complaint: *I am writing to express my disgust at the appalling treatment I received while staying at your hotel.
 I insist upon full compensation or I will be forced to take this matter further.*
- Start a new paragraph for each different aspect of the topic.
- You should state the reason for the complaint in the first paragraph.
- Any complaints you make should be supported with a justification.
- Complaints and justification can be linked together as follows:
*I still haven't received the goods I ordered **in spite of/despite the fact that** I sent you a cheque three weeks ago.
Although/Even though I have only used the automatic tin-opener once, it no longer works. I have written to you twice **but** you have not taken any action.
 I have already written to you twice. **Nevertheless,/However,** you have not taken any action.*

Introduction

Paragraph 1

reason for writing

Main Body

Paragraphs 2 - 3

complaint(s) and justification

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

suggested action to be taken,
closing remarks

full name

- 2** Match the complaints with the justification using appropriate linking words.

Complaint

- My 2-year-old daughter cut herself on the toy.
- When we received the bill we realised we had been charged the full price.
- The top rack of the dishwasher has broken.
- You still keep delivering equipment to the wrong address.
- I received a letter saying my licence has expired.
- The shirt's bright red collar has turned pink.
- I had to share a bathroom with other guests.

Justification

- I sent you a cheque to renew it a month ago.
- I informed you of my change of business address.
- I booked a room with a private bathroom.
- I have only used it three times.
- You claim it is safe for children over 18 months.
- The label states that it can be washed at high temperatures without the colours fading.
- We were told there would be a 20% discount if we ordered before June.

Useful Language for Letters of Complaint

Opening Remarks: (Mild) I am writing to complain about/ regarding/on account of/because of/on the subject of .../I am writing to draw your attention to .../I am writing to you in connection with ... etc. (Strong) I was appalled at/I want to express my strong dissatisfaction with/I feel I must protest/complain about, etc.

Closing Remarks: (Mild) I hope/assume you will replace/I trust the situation will improve/I hope the matter will be resolved/I hope we can sort this matter out amicably, etc.

(Strong) I insist you replace the item at once/I demand a full refund/I hope that I will not be forced to take further action, etc.

3 Read the letter and state the topic of each paragraph. Is it a mild or strong letter of complaint? Then fill in the table below with the complaints and the justification.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I want to express my strong dissatisfaction with the service I received during a visit to your restaurant on December 12th. Firstly, I had booked a table for my wife and myself for 8:30, but it was 9 o'clock before we were seated. Such a delay seems to me inexcusable.

Then, in spite of the fact that I had repeated our order to check that the waiter had heard me correctly, he proceeded to bring us the wrong starters. Such careless service should not be tolerated in a restaurant which charges such high prices.

To make matters worse, the chocolate gateau we were served for dessert was quite stale. The menu claimed, though, that all desserts were freshly prepared that day.

My wife and I will not be dining in your restaurant again; however, as manager, you would be wise to guard against such appalling treatment of your customers in future.

Yours faithfully,
Larry Dunman

4 Read the following letter and correct the mistakes. Write **S** for spelling, **G** for grammar, **P** for punctuation, **WO** for word order or **WW** for wrong word.

Dear Sir/Madam, **G** am writing

I **wrote** to complain for a washing machine **who** I recently **took** from your company.

When I used the machine for the first time **properly it worked** and the clothes **come** out clean and fresh. **Also**, when I used the machine the second time, **it** seemed to have been a malfunction **while** the rinse cycle. The clothes still had quite a lot of soap in them when I **have taken** them out.

Furthermore, when I **tried** washing another load of laundry the same thing happened. In addition to this, the machine did not **hit** the water to the right temperature. Even though I had turned the dial to 50°C, the water in the machine remained cold throughout the entire cycle.

I assume you will replace the washing machine as it is obviously **wrong**. I hope the matter **will resolve** promptly.

Yours faithfully,
nancy Gillis



Complaints

Justification

Complaints	Justification

Unit 8 Letters of Complaint

When you want to introduce another complaint in a letter, you can begin the sentence with one of the following linking words or phrases: **what is more, in addition, furthermore, moreover, etc.**

5 Punctuate the following letter of complaint and divide it into paragraphs. Then comment on the tone of this letter.

Dear Mr Haynes

i am writing to complain about the two alsatian dogs that you own although i have repeatedly asked you to prevent the dogs from leaving your garden you have failed to do so as a result my front lawn has been dug up twice over the past three days furthermore their continual barking is extremely disruptive both to local residents and myself finally I feel that these dogs have a tendency to be aggressive as I have told you in the past nevertheless they are allowed to roam the streets of our neighbourhood which I consider unacceptable i hope that having made my feelings clear to you this matter can be resolved

Yours sincerely,
William Penton



6 Read the letter and underline the correct linking words in brackets. Is the language mild or strong?

Dear Mrs Brosnan,

I am writing to complain about a waterproof jacket I purchased from your shop last week.

1) (**However/Although**) the jacket was supposed to be completely waterproof, I got soaked the first time I wore it in wet weather. 2) (**Furthermore/But**), when I tried to take the jacket off, the zip wouldn't open and when I tried to get it unstuck, the jacket tore.

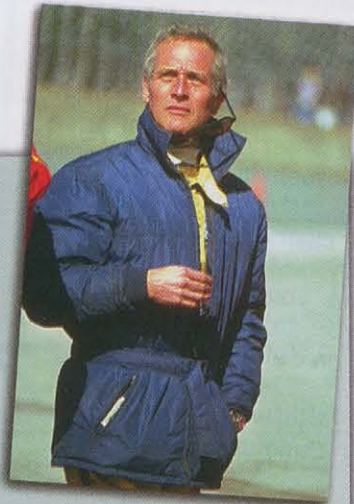
I sent the jacket back to your shop after having been assured by one of the assistants that I would be sent a refund.

3) (**However /In addition**), I still have not received one.

As a regular customer of yours, I feel disappointed with the way I have been treated and hope that steps will be taken to rectify the situation.

I trust this matter will receive your immediate attention.

Yours sincerely,
John Wells



7 Write the following letters in the appropriate style using 120 - 180 words.

- 1 You stayed at a holiday resort recommended by your travel agent. However, you did not enjoy your stay due to a number of difficulties. Write a letter describing them and asking for action to be taken.
- 2 You have recently bought a cassette player but it does not work properly. Write a letter of complaint to the manager of the shop where you bought it.

Writing A letter of complaint



A Read and think about context

- 1 Read this letter referring to one of the adverts in lesson 8A on >> p.90. Why has the writer written this letter to the editor? Underline the best reason, to inform to entertain to persuade



Dear Editor,

- 1 I'm writing to express my concern about an advert which appeared on page 90 of your magazine last month. I found it to be misleading and untruthful.
- 2 The advert, which is for a skin cream called Oil of Elixir, claims to stop skin from ageing. However, ¹it contains a photograph of a young woman of about 20 using the cream. ²_____ suggests that the woman does not have wrinkles because she uses Oil of Elixir. ³_____ is misleading because she wouldn't have wrinkles even without the cream.
- 3 Furthermore, the advert uses false information to sell the product. ⁴_____ says that the cream comes from 'an ancient Egyptian formula discovered in Cleopatra's mountain palace'. ⁵_____ is clearly a lie, since Cleopatra never had a mountain palace.
- 4 I am a regular reader of your magazine and I have always found ⁶_____ to be interesting and informative. Unfortunately, this high standard is greatly reduced by the inclusion of misleading adverts such as this one. Therefore, I urge you to remove it from your next issue and check all future adverts more carefully.
Yours faithfully,
Cleo Patra

- 2 Do you agree with the writer's opinion? Discuss with a partner.
- 3 Read sentences a and b. Underline the correct word in the rules.
I wrote a letter to the editor of a magazine.
a It was about a misleading advert.
b This is not something I normally do.

Rules

Use *it*/*this* to refer to the whole idea (e.g. *writing a letter to an editor*) expressed in the previous sentence.
Use *it*/*this* to refer to one specific object (e.g. *the letter*) in the previous sentence.

- 4 Work with a partner. Read the letter again and write *it* or *this* in each gap. Both may be possible. Say what they refer to.
Example 1 *it* refers to the advert

B Think about organization

- 5 Make a note of the main point of each paragraph next to 1–4 below. Compare with a partner.
 - 1 reason for writing to complain about an advert
 - first concern
 - second concern
 - action points
- 6 How does the writer connect ideas? Find the words in the letter which match the uses 1–4 below. Check in a dictionary if necessary.
 - 1 to introduce a contrasting statement *However*
 - 2 to introduce another similar point
 - 3 to introduce reasons
 - 4 to introduce a logical conclusion

C Think about style

- 7 The letter is formal. Read it again and find examples of formal ways of saying 1–6 below. Compare with a partner.
 - 1 This letter is to say that I'm worried about ...
I'm writing to express my concern about ...
 - 2 ... says it stops skin from getting old
 - 3 It gives you the idea that the woman doesn't ...
 - 4 And another thing – the advert uses lies ...
 - 5 ... by putting in adverts that give you the wrong idea ...
 - 6 So I really want you to take it out ...
- 8 Find two more examples of formal language and compare with a partner.

ABC Put it all together

- 9 Work with a partner. Look at the advert for Hirsute Homme on >> p.90 and decide what you could write to complain about. Make notes.
Example Afghan woolly buffalo – false information
- 10 Write a letter to the editor of a magazine to express concern about the advert for Hirsute Homme on >> p.90. Write about 120–180 words. Use the paragraph organization from exercise 5.
- 11 Check your writing. Have you connected your ideas? Is your style consistently formal?
- 12 Work in pairs or small groups. Exchange letters and decide which one would persuade the reader the most.

I can write a letter of complaint.

Tick ✓ the line.

with a lot of help

with some help

on my own

very easily

WRITING a letter of complaint

7A Work in pairs and discuss. In what circumstances would you write a letter of complaint or make an official complaint? Have you ever done this? What happened?

B Read the letter and answer the questions.

- 1 Who is the letter to?
- 2 Why is the writer complaining?
- 3 What does he want to achieve?

15 Maple Road
Hillhead
HH12 84L
5th February

Hillhead Local Council
1662 Parkway
Hillhead, H3 7JT

Dear Sir or Madam,

- 1 I am writing with regard to the Council's recent installation of CCTV cameras in our area.
- 2 Briefly, the problem is that despite guarantees about safeguarding the CCTV images, it is possible for anyone to view them on their home computer because the system is internet-linked and not password-protected. As a result, pictures cannot be kept secure and, in fact, myself and my car can be identified in images that were recently posted online. I regard this as a serious invasion of privacy as well as a violation of the local council promise to taxpayers.
- 3 I have already pursued this matter with the local police department, who have advised me to contact you immediately.
- 4 In order to resolve this matter I am requesting that you remove the images where I appear without delay (specific coordinates are detailed in the enclosed document), and that you take action to prevent further invasions of privacy in the future. This would include ensuring that internet-based CCTV images are passworded and that techniques are used to blur the pictures so that individuals are unrecognisable.
- 5 Please contact me within ten days of the date of this letter to confirm that these steps have been taken. If you need to contact me by telephone, you may reach me at (0141) 985-001.
- 6 Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Steven Jones

Steven Jones

C Write the number of the paragraph next to the correct topic.

- a) explain what you have done so far 3
- b) give a time frame for action and a way of contacting you
- c) state the overall reason for writing, in one sentence
- d) write a polite closing comment
- e) ask for specific action from the person/company you are writing to
- f) give additional detail about the reason for writing

LEARN TO use formal written language

8A Match informal phrases 1–7 with formal phrases in the letter.

- 1 Get in touch soon to let me know that you've done something
- 2 To put things right, I want you to ...
- 3 I'm writing about
- 4 With best wishes
- 5 Thanks for dealing with this problem quickly
- 6 I'm sending something with this letter
- 7 I've already discussed the problem

B Work in pairs. Underline all the examples of the passive in the letter. Why is it used so often?

speakout TIP

A letter of complaint should follow 'The Four Cs'. It should be: concise, clear, constructive and considerate. Reread the letter. Does it follow all four of 'The Four Cs'?

9A Plan a letter of complaint.

- 1 Read the notes below and choose one of the situations.
- 2 Decide what you want to achieve in the letter.
- 3 Make notes on the content of each paragraph.

Situation 1

Your neighbours / new burglar alarm / alarm gone off three times / neighbours away / tried to talk to them / too busy

Write a letter of complaint to your neighbours.

Situation 2

Recently you parked car / thought it was legal / returned / parking fine / no-parking sign / behind tree

Write a letter of complaint to your local council.

Situation 3

Recently you joined online DVD store / huge increase of spam / email unusable / store did not protect contact details

Write a letter of complaint to the customer service department of the online store.

B Write the letter (120–180 words).

C Check the grammar, spelling and punctuation of your letter.

D Exchange your letter with another student.

Check that he/she has:

- followed The Four Cs.
- used paragraphs well.
- used a formal style.