

Writing file 5

Writing a response to a letter of complaint

- 1 Have you ever had to complain about a service you have received? How did you complain? What was the response?
- 2 Read the letter of complaint quickly. Find out what the problem is and what the person wants done. Is the letter polite?

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to complain about the recent order we placed with your company. Unfortunately the order was not supplied correctly so I am writing to ask for an explanation as to what happened and how it will be remedied.

On 30th October this year we placed an order with your company for 10,000 items. However, on taking delivery of the shipment, it was discovered that you had sent only 8,000 units but had invoiced us for 10,000. This shortfall has put our company in a difficult position as we were due to supply one of our major customers and as such we were unable to fulfil their order.

Please could you look into what happened and obviously make up the shortfall in our order immediately. While we do not wish this incident to have a long-term effect on our working relationship, we would be forced to take further action in the event the problem is not resolved at the earliest opportunity.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours faithfully

Chris Vidic

- 3 Work with a partner and discuss how you would respond to the complaint.
- 4 Work with a partner and decide which of the following is good advice when responding to a complaint.
 - a Explain how the trouble occurred.
 - b Express sincere regret.
 - c Blame the customer.
 - d Tell the customer they are the only person who complained.
 - e Explain what you intend to do to rectify the situation.
 - f Make promises you can't keep.
 - g Trivialize the complaint – this is no big deal.
 - h Offer a goodwill gesture.
 - i Promise to get to the bottom of the problem.
- 5 In what order would you put the steps you chose in 4 in a letter of response to a complaint?
- 6 Look at expressions 1–6 below. Match each one to a piece of good advice in 4.
 - 1 I'm terribly sorry to hear about _____
 - 2 I'm afraid we have been having _____
 - 3 I will be investigating what exactly happened _____
 - 4 In the meantime I've arranged for _____
 - 5 We would like to offer you _____
 - 6 Once again, please accept our sincere apologies _____
- 7 Now match 1–6 in 6 to a–f below to construct a letter responding to the complaint in 2.
 - a ... a 10% discount off your next order as we value your custom greatly. _____
 - b ... problems with our inventory system recently. _____
 - c ... the problems you've had with this shipment. _____
 - d ... for the inconvenience this has caused you. _____
 - e ... to make sure this problem doesn't occur again. _____
 - f ... the outstanding 2,000 units to be dispatched to you today. _____
- 8 Match a–f below to a phrase with a similar meaning in 6 above.
 - a What I'll do immediately is ...
 - b I would like to apologize for ...
 - c I hope you will accept ...
 - d I'm afraid this was because of ...
 - e I really do apologize for ...
 - f I would like to look into this further ...
- 9 Choose one of the problems below and write a letter of complaint.
 - A new computer has broken down after just two days.
 - You have just received a delivery where all the goods were damaged.
 - You have just come back from a business trip and your baggage was lost.
- 10 When you have finished, swap letters with a partner and respond to the letter of complaint that you have received as sympathetically as possible using the information in 5, 6, 7 and 8 to help you.