

Writing to complain

Teaching the Topic

Sometimes you don't get what you want or you aren't happy with a business's response when you first complain. You might need to take things further by writing a letter or email of complaint.

The learner must be clear about what the issue is and what steps they have already taken to work out the problem. They need to be assertive in saying what they want to happen and why.

Resources

- Letters or emails received from a business.
- Terms and conditions, contracts, guarantee and warranty statements that come with items bought or services used.
- Complaint letter templates (for example <http://advocacy.hdc.org.nz/self-advocacy/writing-a-letter-of-complaint>).

Suggested activities

- Talk about what's different and what's the same in a **letter** of complaint and an **email** of complaint – elements you might leave out in an email, for example, the date and your signature.
- Talk about what records might be required to support a complaint, for example, store receipt, a bill, a photograph of the item showing the problem. Talk about the importance of sending copies and keeping hold of originals.
- Use a complaint letter template to practise writing a letter or email about a problem the learner has or has had in the past.

Using the Worksheet

Introductory activity: Has the learner ever written a letter or email complaining about something they weren't happy with? What did they say in their letter? What happened in response?

This activity uses a letter of complaint to a power company. The learner reads each question and finds the answer. They write the number of the question at the end of the line.

Main learning points

- Find the common elements of a written complaint.
- A complaint letter or email needs to be short and to the point.
- They need to stick to the facts – what their complaint is, how this has come about, what they have done about it, what response they got, what information they can provide in support of their complaint, what they want to happen next.

Language

- How to start a letter or email – *Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Mrs X, Dear Mr Y, Dear Ms Z, To whom it may concern.*
- How to end a letter or email – *Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully, Regards, I look forward to your response.*
- Complaints – *There is a mistake in this bill. This is not what I ordered. I dispute this charge because... I was disappointed with... This item is faulty. The advice I was given was incorrect.*
- Supporting information provided – *receipt, credit card statement, proof of purchase, guarantee.*
- What do you want to happen? – *I expect you to... I would be happy if... I would like...*

Writing to complain

I'm not happy with that!

Read each question below, then find the answer in the letter. Write the number of the question in the circle at the end of the line. For example:

1 16 Main Street
Auckland 2104

11 May 2012

Sparks Energy
PO Box 1234
Auckland 1010

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to complain about a charge on my bill.

On 4 April my family moved house. I had organised to have the power account we have with you shifted from our old house to the new one. I did this through your Customer Service Centre. They didn't mention any cost for doing this.

When I got our first bill, there was an extra connection fee of \$60 + GST listed. I don't think we should have to pay this fee because I wasn't told about it when I called to organise the change of address.

I called your Customer Service Centre yesterday to ask about this fee. The person I spoke to said it was a standard charge for all new connections and I had to pay it. I don't agree. I should have been told about the fee when I first called to transfer the account.

I have attached a copy of my bill for April. It shows the fee I was not expecting. Our account number is 123-000987.

I will pay the bill, but not the connection fee. I expect this fee to be removed from my next bill.

Yours faithfully
Daleep Kumar

1. What is the letter writer's address?
2. What is the writer's name?
3. What is the name and address of the power company the person is writing to?
4. What is the writer's account number with this power company?
5. How much is the connection fee the letter writer does not want to pay?
6. Who has the writer already spoken to about their complaint?
7. What has the writer provided a copy of with his letter?
8. What does the writer want to happen?