

Letters of Complaint

General Recommendations



Layout

Use the formal letter/email format

Politeness

The tone of complaint letters should not be aggressive or insulting, as this would annoy the reader and not encourage them to solve the problem. In addition, questions such as 'Why can't you get this right?' should not be included.

Content

- Keep in mind that most errors are unintentional and realize that most businesses and organizations want to address and clear up complaints quickly in order to have satisfied customers or members.
- Be brief
Keep your complaint letter to one page, and write short paragraphs rather than long ones
- Be honest and straightforward
Include sufficient detail to back up your claim and to show that you have thoroughly researched the subject. However, omit irrelevant details.
- Maintain a firm but respectful tone, and avoid aggressive, accusing language
Keep your complaint letter concise and professional
- Send only photocopies of receipts and other documents, and retain all originals
Keep a copy of the complaint letter for your records
- Get other signatures
In many cases, you can increase the effectiveness of your letter by getting several others to sign it with you. This is particularly the case when trying to influence or change legislation, denouncing material from the media, and so forth.
- Do not threaten!
If a company has repeatedly given you bad service and refuses to correct the situation and you feel that your only recourse is to pursue legal action, voice your feelings in a tactful but firm way. However, don't threaten legal action unless you are willing to follow through with it.
- Avoid making generalizations about the company or organization if your complaint letter focuses on a single individual.
- Use tact, and be direct, but respectful
If you need to make a complaint to or about people that you will still have contact with on a regular basis, your complaint needs to accomplish its purpose without destroying the relationship.
- Include your contact information
Include your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, if desired, so that the person(s) can reach you to discuss any questions or concerns.