

Writing a letter of complaint



Background

This activity is designed to follow on from previous discussion about formal language and letter writing. It can be adapted to suit all levels but is best for Entry 3 - Level 2. As a group we discuss the purpose of a letter of complaint (or email) and what writers are trying to achieve when sending one.

Objectives

Learners will consider the importance of the purpose, content, style and tone of letters; and write a suitable letter of complaint from a given scenario.

Method

After initial discussion I ask students what they think of my efforts to compose a letter and show letters 1 and 2 (pass round paper copies and/or display on an interactive whiteboard). Letter 1 is too informal, lacking information and has a swear word. Discuss (some students may well say it is fine!). Letter 2 is too detailed and takes too long to get to the point. What's the letter actually about?

We then work collaboratively to compose a response. Depending on the group, you could ask learners to work in pairs on different parts of the letter and then bring it all together at the end. This provides scaffolding and prepares students to work on their own letters from a given scenario (see p3 for ideas). I then show letter 3 and discuss my own style and format. Depending on level, students are then supported in composing their own letter. For the weaker students I use the forms tool bar with choices for different parts of the letter. In some cases, again depending on the group, we prepare a template together.

Curriculum links

Adult Literacy

Covers many aspects of the adult literacy curriculum (writing) including those listed below. Reading and discussion skills (not listed) will also be involved although exact coverage will depend on the learner group and how the resource is used by the tutor. For related resources visit the download page for this resource at www.skillsworkshop.org

Wt/E3.2 organise writing in short paragraphs

Wt/E3.3 sequence chronological writing

Wt/L1.4 Use language suitable for purpose and audience (a) understand that writers can select language at different levels of complexity, formality and specialism, and depending on context, audience and purpose (b) understand that some types of written communication have specific language associated e.g. invitations, estate agents' leaflets.

Wt/L2.6 Use different styles of writing for different purposes e.g. persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, technical vocabulary (a) understand that the style of writing involves choice of vocabulary, sentence length and structure, how the text is organised (b) understand that what is appropriate style depends on purpose, audience, context

Functional English

For embedding the Functional English criteria (see below) learners could, for example, be asked to come up with scenarios related to their specific vocational area.

Entry 3 Plan, draft and organise writing

Entry 3 Sequence writing logically and clearly

Level 1 Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience.

Level 2 Present information and ideas concisely, logically, and persuasively.

Level 2 Use a range of writing styles for different purposes.

Writing a letter of complaint



Scenario

I visited the Water Centre, Yarmouth with a 4 year old and 6 year old during half term and was very disappointed to find:

- Fun Bridge closed
- Sand area almost non-existent and dirty
- Cafe half stocked

Write a letter of complaint

Writing a letter of complaint



Letter of complaint scenarios

- You and a friend have arranged to be picked up by a taxi firm at 7.15 pm to go to the cinema in Alton. The taxi did not arrive and you could not get through to the taxi station for 30 minutes to sort it out. By this time, you had missed the start of the film and lost the £7.50 that you had each paid to book your seats.

Write a complaint. What do you want the outcome to be?

- You pay your mobile phone bill each month by direct debit. It should be £35 but there has been a mistake and you have been charged £335. As a result you have gone overdrawn by £200.

Write a complaint. What do you want the outcome to be?

- You have ordered some trousers from a mail order catalogue form. They arrived in good time, but you did not like them and so returned them through the post office. You obtained a receipt. The mail order firm have now sent you a statement saying you owe £45.00 for the trousers.

Write a complaint. What do you want the outcome to be?

- You are feeling very cross. You had arranged to catch the 11.15 train from Alton to London last week. You need assistance at the train station in London and had arranged it all beforehand with a Mr Smith. The assistance was not available and as a result you were left on the train for half an hour before the cleaner found you. She helped you off the train and you carried on with your journey but you were late meeting your friends and felt most upset about the whole situation.

Write a complaint. What do you want the outcome to be?

Letter 1



29 The Street
Walton
Hants
GU54 4EJ

1 Nov 2010

Hello,

There wasn't enough sand at your place and why was your fun bridge not working? I think it's bloody ridiculous that you didn't have blackcurrant flavour lollies and my George's favourite wasn't there. I won't be coming any more.

Thank you,

Julie

Letter 2



29 High Street
WALTON
County of Hampshire
GU54
Great Britain

First day in November in the Year 2010

Dearest Sir,

I am writing on this cloudy, rainy day to let you know about my excursion to your centre this last Monday, no Wednesday, 27th October in the year 2010.

My visit was with my two dearly beloved children, James aged 6 years and George aged 2 years to celebrate the start of the half term holiday. It was such a bright day with the sun gleaming in the horizon; I ensured that the children had their sun block factor fifteen – you can never be too careful you know. We wanted Gran to come along with us that day but her arthritis was playing up again and Granddad said she must rest at home.

Well, we set off at 9.00am as we wanted to avoid the traffic. George had Weetabix that morning and James porridge. I wanted to make sure they had eaten well as things can be so expensive at centres like yours. I decided upon kippers – Iceland's, very good flavour.....

Letter 3



29 High Street
Walton
Hants
GU54 2NT

30 October 2010

Dear Sir,

Visit to Water Centre 27th October 2010

I would like to bring to your attention how disappointed I was with the standard of facilities at your new Water Centre. I have visited many Water Centres over the years and was very much looking forward to this visit with my two young children during the half term break.

Whilst many of the attractions were open, some of the main ones for children were closed or broken. The fun bridge was closed and the sand area had all but disappeared, consisting mainly of dirt and twigs. On top of this, the spray fountains were a great disappointment. Even the cafe looked ready to close for the season being only half stocked with child friendly food and drinks.

I did bring all of the above to the attention of the duty manager but all he could offer as an excuse was that it was the end of the season. This is most irritating as, like other visitors that day, we did not pay end of season entrance prices.

I should be pleased to receive your comments. I hope that you can restore my confidence in Water Centres as an ideal venue for families.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Tina Jones