
DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS – EMAIL OF APOLOGY



Complaints are never a happy occasion, particularly if you are trying to keep a client or customer happy and you are struggling with the language. However, they are the perfect occasion for improvement and for fixing problems or finding solutions to make our client feel satisfied.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A complaint (noun)

To complain **to** someone **about** something/someone (regular verb)

To make a complaint

It is important to remember the response to a complaint should have 4/5 parts:

1. **Apologize** for the problem and **acknowledge** the situation – no matter if you created it or not – no matter whether the issue is true or not. What you are apologizing for is the fact that a customer is unhappy. And that's not good for business.
2. **Ask for the specifics** of the problem – what happened or what went wrong.
3. Say that you will **take action** [and take it!],
4. **Offer** a kind of **compensation**
 - a refund,
 - to fix the error/problem
 - a discount on your next order/a voucher for future purchases/ a compensation for the damage caused/ etc...
 - an upgrade to a premium version
 - exchange faulty product
5. **Check back** with the customer later to make sure the problem was resolved to their satisfaction.

LANGUAGE FOCUS:

- I am writing **to**.../I am writing **with** regard **to**.../ in response **to**/ in reference **to**...
- To apologize **for** something
- To ask **for** a compensation
- I/we look **forward to** + noun (e.g. your reply)
I/we **look forward to** + Verb-**ing** (e.g. receiving your reply)
- The problem was caused **by** ...(e.g. a delay) .../The problem was due **to**...(e.g. a delay)
- We would like to offer a **discount/refund/compensation/voucher/replacement/etc...**
- Synonyms: **error/problem/issue/trouble/matter/inconvenience/etc..**



A response to a letter of

In your text include:

- confirmation that you received the letter
- an apology for the customer's inconvenience information about how you are handling the problem
- An assurance that this will not happen again
- take action for the damage or inconvenience caused

Useful Language

Thank you for your letter of ...

I am writing to apologise for...

We regret the inconvenience that was caused. We will replace the ...

We will exchange the ...

We assure you that this will not happen again. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Tips!

- Divide the text into paragraphs (introduction, body and conclusions)
- Every paragraph must contain one principal idea
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Write full names (name + surnames)
- Spellcheck your text before delivery
- Use varied vocabulary and language structures
- Use connectors and linkers to join sentences together

More information

- Write **Dear Sam Phillips**, if you know the person. Write **Dear Sir / Madam** (if you don't know the receiver) – never Dear Sam (without the surname) in formal communication
- Conclude with **Yours sincerely** , if you know the receiver, or **Yours faithfully** if you don't
- Other conclusive formulas: Best regards/Kind regards/

TARGET LANGUAGE

Functions		Responses	
1	Acknowledging receipt of a complaint letter	Thank you for your letter of 3 February.	
2	Apology for the error or fault	I would like to apologise for the error made by our company.	
3	Accepting a Complaint	We agree that the usual high standards of our products were not met in this instance.	
4	Explanation of the fault	This was caused by an unexpected malfunction.	
5	Assurance	We assure you that this will not happen again.	
6	Replacement of goods	We have dispatched the new items.	
7	Regret at dissatisfaction	We understand how disappointing it can be when your expectations are not met.	
8	Rejecting responsibility	I regret to inform you that we cannot take responsibility for this occurrence.	
9	Reasons for the rejection	This is because the item was on sale, and therefore refunds and returns are not permitted.	
10	A concluding sentence aiming at retaining the goodwill	We look forward to your continued custom, and to serving you again.	

Sample email of apology 1

Dear Mr Alex Wong,

Please accept our apologies **for** the error made **by** our company **in** filling your order no. 2639/L dated Wednesday, 4 March 2015.

You ordered 12,000 size Ultra super-long-life premium batteries, but our dispatch office sent 1,200. This was **due to** a typing error.

The balance of 10,800 batteries was dispatched **by** express courier **to** your store this morning and will arrive **by** Monday, 16 March 2015.

Since we value your business, we **would like to** offer you a 10% **discount** off your next order with us.

We look **forward to receiving** your further orders and assure you that they will be filled correctly.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Rider

Sample email of apology 2

Subject: Apology and Resolution for Your Recent Monitor Purchase

Dear [Customer's Name and Surname],

I hope this message finds you well. I would like to sincerely apologize **for** the inconvenience you faced with your recent monitor purchased at our shop. It is disheartening to learn about the broken monitor and the unsatisfactory assistance provided by our staff.

To make things right, we **would like to** offer you a **replacement** monitor, which will undergo thorough quality checks before being dispatched. Additionally, as a gesture of goodwill, we are extending a [percentage]% **discount on** your next purchase.

Please **reply to** this email with your preferred shipping address and a convenient time for the replacement delivery. If you have any further concerns, feel free to reach out.

We **apologize for** any inconvenience caused and appreciate your understanding as we work to rectify this situation promptly.

Best regards,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Position]

[Your Contact Information + company name]

Caterina Ines Latella