

Degree Complements: Letter of Complaint

**READING
TEXT**

INTRODUCTION

No company or organization can please all of its customers all of the time. If the problem is with a company, they can boycott or they may just complain to friends and family. Sometimes, however, a direct complaint is necessary. People may complain to someone they can deal with face-to-face, or they may, as in this exercise, decide to go right to the top and decide to write a letter to the head of the company or person concerned.

In this exercise you will be writing a complaint letter, and your fellow students will answer them. First, you will read some tips on complaint letter writing. Then, you will read and evaluate a complaint letter and a response to it. Finally, you will write a complaint letter, which some of your fellow students will read and answer. The following are a few things to consider when writing a complaint letter and when responding to one.

COMPLAINT TIPS	RESPONSE TIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Put yourself in your reader’s shoes, and appeal to your reader’s needs and wants. ◆ Think about your goal, and make sure your letter expresses it. ◆ Don’t go for emotional satisfaction through insult or anger. Try to win by getting what you want. ◆ Demand an answer or some action. ◆ Be polite. ◆ Write as well as you can. People take the message of a good writer more seriously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Answer promptly. ◆ Be polite. ◆ Answer in accordance with company policy. ◆ Try to appear to be sympathetic to the customer. ◆ Don’t be argumentative. ◆ Do explain and defend yourself if necessary.

SAMPLE LETTER

The following is an example of a complaint letter.

Complaint scenario: Mary Smith bought a coffee maker from *The Mean Bean Coffee Machine Company* seven months ago. Since then, she has broken four coffee pots in what she claims is normal use. She thinks the pots are too cheaply made, and is writing to the company to demand a refund for her machine.



Dear Mean Bean Coffee Machine Company:

I bought my Mean Bean Coffee Machine just before Christmas because my mother was coming to visit, and she drinks more coffee than anyone you have ever met. Anyway, we were doing the dishes on Christmas Day when CRACK!; the coffee pot cracked in the sink, which was full of hot water. Hot water should not break a coffee pot, even a glass one. I thought my poor old Mum would die of a heart attack.

Since then I have bought three more pots for my Mean Bean Coffee Machine, and all of them have broken for no good reason. I think that the glass you are using for these pots is too thin. The coffee pots are simply not strong enough. Needless to say, I am very frustrated. I would like you to refund my money for the entire machine. I have enclosed my bill for \$54.28.

*Sincerely,
Mary Smith*

Find the degree complements in the letter above.

RESPONSE SCENARIO

John Valley is the President of *The Mean Bean Coffee Machine Company*. He knows that his glass coffee pots are made of poor quality glass, but he has decided not to admit it. He wants to make Ms. Smith go away, and forget about her claim for a refund. He is not a very honest person.

The Mean Bean Coffee Machine Company

Dear Ms. Smith:

My name is John Valley; and I am the President of The Mean Bean Coffee Machine Company. Here at Mean Bean, we are proud of our product, and of our good customer relations; which is why I'm writing to you personally. We have been selling these fine machines for eleven years, and we have had very few complaints. As you know, glass does break, and our coffee pots, like those of most other coffee machines, are made of glass.

I regret to tell you that we cannot therefore refund your money. Please be more careful with your coffee pot. Treat it gently and with respect, and it will bring you years of caffeinated or decaffeinated joy.

Sincerely,

John Valley
President



Comprehension questions for the complaint letter.

1. Why did Mary's mom almost have a heart attack?

2. Did Mary use her machine the day after Christmas?

3. Was the entire machine broken during the Christmas holidays?

Comprehension questions for the response letter.

1. Why is Mr. Valley not a very honest man?

2. Is the president of the company going to give Mary a refund? Why or why not?

3. What advice does he give her?

COMPLAINT LETTER

Now, you are going to write a complaint letter. You will read a scenario and write your letter using the information in the scenario. When you have finished your letter, give it to another student who will then write a reply. After you receive your response, show the letters to your teacher for correction and feedback. **HINT:** Complaint letters should contain some degree complements.

SCENARIO (COMPLAINT LETTER)

You recently bought an expensive pair of chic Italian boots at the downtown branch of *Foot Beautiful*, an exclusive shoe store chain. The day after you first wore your new boots in the rain, the front half of the right sole came flapping off the boot. The *Foot Beautiful* store manager refused to take action claiming that you must have ruined the boots on purpose. You write to Susan Steptoe, the President of *Foot Beautiful*, to complain.

A large rectangular box with a double-line border and four corner tabs (top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right). Inside the box, there are 20 horizontal lines for writing a letter.

RESPONSE SCENARIO

Susan Steptoe, the President of *Foot Beautiful*, knows that the manager of her downtown store is inexperienced; but she also knows that she is stuck with him, because he is her brother-in-law! She responds to the upset customer's letter.

A large rectangular box with a thick black border and four corner tabs (top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right). Inside the box, there are 18 horizontal lines for writing a response.