

Formal letter: making a complaint

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Why do some people choose to stay in a hotel when they're on holiday? Why do others choose to stay in a self-catering apartment?
- 2 What kinds of problems might you have staying in each type of accommodation?

- 3 Which problems would you accept as 'part of life' and which would you complain about to the hotel or apartment owner?
- 4 What would be your reason(s) for complaining?

2 You have been on a walking holiday in the UK with your British friends, Jamie and Anna. Read Jamie's letter to the tour company. Which of these problems does he mention?

- |                        |                          |                     |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| inexperienced guides   | <input type="checkbox"/> | unexpected costs    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| uncomfortable minibus  | <input type="checkbox"/> | not enough guides   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| bad food               | <input type="checkbox"/> | dirty accommodation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| inaccurate information | <input type="checkbox"/> | rude hotel staff    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to complain about the walking tour that my friends and I went on from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July with your company. I enclose copies of our receipts for your information.

The first problem we experienced was the sudden departure of one of the guides on the second day of the tour. This was completely understandable as he had a family emergency, but his replacement did not arrive until Day 5. This meant that we had only one guide for three days, and this was insufficient. On Day 4, someone had an accident during our walk, and the guide had to take her to hospital. The rest of us had to continue on to the next hotel, and we got lost on the way. We got there eventually, but it would have been safer if we had had a guide.

Secondly, the walks were much more difficult than expected. They were advertised as 'easy', but we all found them very challenging.

Finally, a couple of the hotels were disappointing because the standard of cleanliness there was low. At the Hill Hotel the carpets in our rooms were dirty and at the Queen's Head Hotel the bathrooms had not been cleaned.

All in all, the tour fell far short of our expectations. I would, therefore, be grateful if you would consider giving us a partial refund, or a discount on a future tour.

I look forward to hearing from you.  
Yours faithfully,  
Jamie Cooper

3 Read Jamie's letter again and answer the questions.

- 1 Does Jamie communicate clearly what he is unhappy about?
- 2 Does he say what he wants?
- 3 Does he write about anything that is not relevant?
- 4 Which of these words best describes the tone of his letter: *furious*, *quite angry* or *very dissatisfied*?

4 Answer the questions (1–2).

- 1 What is the adjective or verb that these nouns in the letter in exercise 2 come from?  
cleanliness \_\_\_\_\_ expectation \_\_\_\_\_  
departure \_\_\_\_\_ replacement \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 You might need to use the nouns of these adjectives in a letter of complaint. What are they?  
rude \_\_\_\_\_ inconvenient \_\_\_\_\_  
hot \_\_\_\_\_ faulty \_\_\_\_\_  
lazy \_\_\_\_\_ unreliable \_\_\_\_\_

EXAM STRATEGY

In the first paragraph say you are writing to complain and what the product or service is that you are complaining about. Use formal language and be polite. Avoid using a tone that is angry or emotional.

5 EXAM TASK While you were on a visit to a friend in the UK, you saw the following advertisement for a coach tour. You and your friend booked places and went. Write a letter of at least 100 words to the manager of the tour company in which you:

- ▶ complain about the coach,
- ▶ describe the problem you had at the hotel,
- ▶ express your feelings about the missed walking tour of Oxford and ask for compensation.

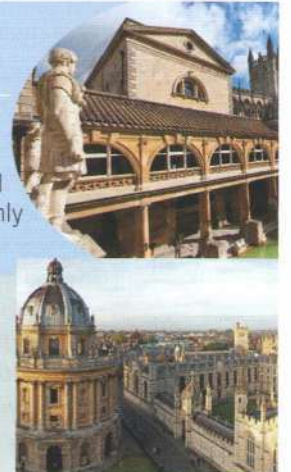
Two-day coach tour of BATH AND OXFORD

BATH

This city tour includes a visit to the Roman Baths, the Royal Crescent and The Circus. Your three-star hotel is only a short distance from the city centre.

OXFORD

A guided walking tour of the colleges, churches and other outstanding buildings gives you a chance to learn about this beautiful and world-famous city.



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Check your work.

- Have you written about all three points in the task?
- Have you communicated your complaints clearly?
- Have you used appropriate language and tone?
- Have you written at least 100 words?

## Formal letter/email: making a complaint

### Beginning your letter

I am writing to complain about ...  
I wish to make a complaint about ...

### Describing what you are enclosing with your letter

I enclose ... for your information/reference.  
Please find enclosed/attached ...

### Describing the situation or event(s)

I am sorry to say that ...  
I am afraid that ...  
I was very disappointed in ...  
This meant that ...  
This led to/caused/resulted in ...

### Asking for action

Please could you ...  
I would like you to ...  
I would be grateful if you would consider a refund/respond to me at the earliest opportunity.  
I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible/within the next few weeks.

If you're writing a letter, put your address and the date in the top right-hand corner. Put the name and address of the person you are writing to in the top left-hand corner. In an email, you don't need to include this.

If you don't know the name of the person you're writing to, use *Dear Sir or Madam* or *Dear Sir/Madam*.

In the first paragraph, explain why you are writing your letter.

In the second and third paragraphs explain why you are complaining. Be accurate and explain everything in detail.

In the last paragraph, explain how the problem affected you and what action you would like the recipient to take (give you a refund, exchange a product, etc.).

If you started with *Dear Sir or Madam*, end with *Yours faithfully*. If you used *Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms + surname*, end with *Yours sincerely*.

If you write a letter instead of an email, sign your name there.

PilotAir  
Gatwick Airport  
RH6 ONP  
UK

Christina Mansfield  
25 Green Street  
Colchester  
Essex  
9 July 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to complain about my family's experience on PilotAir flight PTA456 from Gatwick to Madrid on 23 June this year.

When we arrived at the airport we found that the flight was delayed. I understand that sometimes delays are unavoidable, but in this case the delay was over six hours, and at no time did a PilotAir representative explain to us what was happening or how long we would have to wait. Furthermore, we also received no vouchers for refreshments despite being repeatedly promised them.

When the flight finally took off, we found that there was no food or drink on the plane, and that one of the lavatories was not working. This meant that the journey, especially with two small children, was extremely uncomfortable. To add to this, at no time did any of the cabin crew apologize – in fact they were very unhelpful and disappeared for most of the flight. We finally landed in Madrid at nearly midnight, and found that our car hire office was closed. Consequently, we had to return to the airport the next day to collect our car.

You will appreciate that this experience meant our holiday got off to a very bad start. I completed your online complaint form two weeks ago, but I have heard nothing. In light of the poor service we received, I would like to receive a full refund for the Gatwick–Madrid flight.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Use this phrase to bring your email/letter to an end.

Yours faithfully,

Christina Mansfield

Christina Mansfield