

Writing Effective Complaint Emails

Skills:

Can compose non-routine letters, using appropriate structure and conventions, provided these are restricted to matters of fact.

Adults

Group

1 Watch this short video from “The Intern”. Answer the questions:



Together:

1. What is the issue with the dresses that were ordered for the wedding?
2. What promises does the speaker make to the customer regarding the dresses?
3. Why does the speaker offer to refund all the money to the customer?
4. What contact information does the speaker provide to the customer?

In pairs:

5. Have you ever experienced customer service like this? Do you believe it should be like this?
6. What was the worst customer service you experienced?

2 Read the email and answer the questions on Page 2. Then, identify the key components of a well-written complaint email.

Dear Customer Service,

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the recent purchase of your product, the SmartWatch 2000. I have been using the watch for only two weeks and have already encountered several issues.

Firstly, the battery life is extremely poor. Despite charging the watch overnight, it only lasts for a few hours before needing to be charged again. This is highly inconvenient as I rely on the watch to track my daily activities and receive notifications.

Secondly, the heart rate monitor does not provide accurate readings. On multiple occasions, it has displayed significantly higher or lower heart rates than what I am actually experiencing. As someone who uses this feature to monitor my fitness levels, this inaccuracy is concerning.

Furthermore, the touch screen is not responsive at times, making it difficult to navigate through the various apps and settings. This can be frustrating, especially when I need to quickly access information or respond to messages.

Considering the price of the SmartWatch 2000, I expected a much higher level of quality and functionality. I believe these issues are significant and warrant either a replacement or a refund.

I kindly request that you address these concerns promptly and provide a suitable solution. I have attached the proof of purchase for your reference.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely, your client

1. Which of the following best describes the customer's overall impression of the SmartWatch 2000?

- A. The watch is of high quality and meets the customer's expectations.
- B. The watch is of average quality and the customer is somewhat satisfied.
- C. The watch is of poor quality and the customer is highly dissatisfied.
- D. The watch is of good quality, but the customer has a few minor concerns.

2. What is the main purpose of the customer's letter?

- A. To request a replacement watch.
- B. To provide feedback on the product's performance.
- C. To ask for a refund.
- D. To address the issues with the watch and request a solution.

3 Look at these 6 aspects that should be considered when writing an complaint email. Choose a sentence or phrase from the email that serves as a good example of each aspect and write it down.

Descriptive Language:

Formal Tone:

Polite Phrasing:

Request for Action:

Showing Gratitude for Help:

Follow-up Statement:

4 In small groups, brainstorm a list of common customer complaints that you or your friends/family have expressed in the past. After 5 minutes, share your list with the class and discuss which complaints are the most common among the students.

5 Choose a complaint from the lists that you and your classmates created and write an email expressing it. Use the email from the lesson as a template. Follow the structure of the email and use the appropriate language discussed in Exercise 3.

Correct answers

1

Made in “Audio & Video Questions”.

1. The dresses that were ordered for the wedding arrived in a different color (charcoal gray) instead of pink.
2. The speaker promises to personally see the dresses before they are FedExed and guarantees they will arrive by 9:00 a.m. Friday.
3. The speaker offers to refund all the money to the customer due to the mistake with the dress order.
4. The speaker provides their cell phone number - 718-555-0199 - to the customer.

2

Made in the “Create a text” tool. The key components of a well-written complaint email:

1. **Subject Line**
2. **Salutation:** Begin the email with a polite greeting, such as "Dear Customer Service," or a specific person if known.
3. **Introduction:** Clearly state the reason for writing the email, in this case, expressing dissatisfaction with a recent purchase.
4. **Description of the Issue(s):** Provide detailed descriptions of the problems encountered with the product, including any relevant facts or occurrences.
5. **Impact:** Explain how these issues have affected you or your use of the product, emphasizing the inconvenience or concerns they have caused.
6. **Expectations:** Clearly state what action you expect the company to take, whether it's a replacement, refund, repair, or other resolution.
7. **Supporting Evidence:** If applicable, provide any supporting evidence, such as proof of purchase or photos documenting the issues.
8. **Closing:** Thank the recipient for their attention to the matter and express your anticipation of a prompt resolution.
9. **Closing Salutation:** End the email with a polite closing, such as "Sincerely," followed by your name or signature.
10. **Attachments (if any):** If you've mentioned attaching any documents, make sure to attach them before sending the email.

Correct answers to the questions: 1. C, 2. D.

3

Correct answers:

Descriptive Language:

"Firstly, the battery life is extremely poor."

"Secondly, the heart rate monitor does not provide accurate readings."

"Furthermore, the touch screen is not responsive at times."

Formal Tone:

"I am writing to express my dissatisfaction..."

"Considering the price of the SmartWatch 2000, I expected a much higher level of quality and functionality."

Polite Phrasing:

"I kindly request that you address these concerns promptly and provide a suitable solution."

"Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Request for Action:

"I kindly request that you address these concerns promptly and provide a suitable solution."

"I believe these issues are significant and warrant either a replacement or a refund."

Showing Gratitude for Help:

"Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Follow-up Statement:

"I look forward to hearing from you soon."

4

The idea is generated in the “Lead-in activities” tool.

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