

This week's lesson is going to look more closely at an area of writing that we briefly glanced at in an earlier lesson: Letter writing....

or more specifically, writing a letter of complaint!

Letter Writing Formats

In an earlier assignment I had you write out a letter to an actor, stating why you thought they would be good for a part in a movie you were directing.

I was hoping to give you some further input on how to make your letter writing more effective, both in the content of what you are writing and in the format of your writing.

In order to be persuasive in your writing, you must:

- have all the facts
- organize your critical points effectively
- use firm but reasonable language

When writing a persuasive letter, especially if you are writing a letter of complaint, you are more likely to get favourable results if your words are convincing, concise and courteous.

We are going to look at writing a 'complaint' letter, because you can normally come up with some strong arguments for why you are against something, or why something is defective.

Thinking (Exercise) Activity

Step 1

Persuasive/Complaint Letters

Read the following two letters.

Step 2

Once you have read the letters, try to come up with some general guidelines regarding the techniques the writer/s used to compose these model letters.

Sample 1:

Dear Mr. President,

Fair is fair.

When I bought a television set from WalMart last February, I depended primarily on the good name of Toshiba which appeared on the set. Of course, the one-year warranty was also a big factor.

Since last February my set has been in service just about twenty-five percent of the time. The warranty expires next month and I am still not satisfied with the reception I am getting. My neighbors, with similar sets, get all stations but I can tune-in only two.

Of course, the service company does make repairs under the service guarantee. But it hardly seems right that I should have the set only part of the time, that I must go to the trouble of sending it out almost every month, and that I must look forward to having a troublesome set after the year's warranty is over. Apparently I got a lemon.

Under the circumstances, don't you think it would be proper to replace my Toshiba set with a new one, sparing me all the troubles and your company all the service costs?

Don't you agree?

Very truly yours,

A. Consumer

Sample 2:

Dear Mayor,

I have tried, without success, on three occasions to correct an obvious error of mistaken identity. On October 12, 1999, I received a bill in the amount of \$15.00 for a parking violation in your city on October 1, 1999. I attempted to explain, first by telephone and later in two letters, to the Police Department, that I was not at the University of Alberta on that date. In fact, I wasn't even in Edmonton at all. Since the ruling on non-payment of fines continues to increase each day that the fine is not paid, the attached letter indicates that I now owe over \$25.00 dollars. Worse than that, the indication that I might have to appear in Traffic Court will be an imposition to my employment.

It would be a most unfortunate circumstance to be put to any further inconvenience over this problem. I can substantiate my absence on the date mentioned above. Therefore, before I am forced to bring this matter to the attention of the news media or forced to the expense of legal counsel, I will appreciate your cooperation in getting this rather simple matter cleared.

Sincerely,

A. Traffic Person

Step 3

Have you thought about how the letters were composed? What did the writer, in each case, do to make their plight known? What did they want from the person they sent the letter to?

In each case, they gave:

- a. a clear explanation of what is wrong;
- b. an explanation of the inconvenience caused;
- c. a statement of the steps necessary to rectify the situation; and
- d. a request to have the matter attended to promptly by appealing to fair play or pride, or if necessary, by threatening loss of business or legal action.

The End

Discussion Assignment

Step 1

Think about what someone of your age group might need to write a letter regarding.

Step 2

Using the “Discussion Folder” brainstorm some ideas on what types of things you might need to complain about, and what you might include in your letter to get the response you would like.

For example, you might write a letter to the editor of your local paper complaining about how he/she stereotypes teenagers in your community. You might make him/her aware of the positive youth groups in your community, and suggest that further stereotyping could cause further ‘political’ problems for him/her because you will be eligible to vote by the time he/she comes up for re-election.

Step 3

What other ideas can you come up with?

Hand-In Assignment

Step 1

Think about a product or service that you are not completely satisfied with and write a letter of complaint to the manufacturer letting them know what you are “upset” about.

Don’t forget to use a proper letter format, and to follow the basic guidelines that have been presented above.

You can see a further breakdown of how to write a properly formatted letter in the following attachment: [EN13.16-Letter Assignment](#).

Step 2

Find the address for the company that you are writing to and send out your letter to them. Let me know if you receive a response from them.

Step 3

Send me a copy of your letter!

The End
