

CONSUMER RIGHTS/PROTECTION

How to Complain

WHY COMPLAIN?

It is your right to complain to a business when you have a consumer problem; it's also your responsibility. Complaining is never easy but many businesses appreciate hearing from customers on how they can improve their services. After all, if you're not happy with their products or services, chances are that other customers have encountered the same problem. Here's an action plan to use for resolving a service complaint.

GATHER YOUR INFORMATION

1. Write down exactly what happened:
 - what created the problem;
 - who you have talked with already;
 - when the problem occurred;
 - where the problem happened.
2. Decide what compensation you expect for the problem.
 - You could request a refund, exchange, credit, or just an apology.
3. Gather all relevant receipts and documents:
 - include all records of phone calls and other conversations;
 - record the date and time of every contact made;
 - photocopy any contracts, warranties, receipts, and canceled checks.

CONTACT THE MANAGER OF THE BUSINESS

- Contact the manager as soon as possible after the problem arises. A delay may jeopardize your ability to enforce your rights.
- Telephoning is often not as effective as a personal visit or a letter. Whatever method you choose, remember to document the contact.
- If you are nervous about talking to the manager, bring a friend. Your friend may help you feel more comfortable and can also serve as a witness to the discussion.
- If visiting the store is inconvenient, write a letter and keep a copy for yourself. The following is a "sample complaint letter" to assist you in writing to the store owner or manager.

SAMPLE LETTER

Your Address

City, State, Zip Code

Date

Complaint Department

Name of Company or Organization

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing about . . . (describe the product, including serial and model number, services, issue, law, or event).

I believe the product to be defective because . . . (describe problem briefly and accurately including dates, where purchased, etc.).

Enclosed please find . . . (send photocopies of bills, contracts, canceled checks, etc.).

I would like to . . . (describe what you want done – refund, exchange, repair, investigation, or explanation, etc.).

I thought you would like to know of my dissatisfaction and . . . (state previous efforts and identify consumer protection agency to whom you are sending a copy of this letter).

I look forward to your reply explaining the action you are taking on my problem.

Sincerely,

Your Name

WHAT IF THEY DON'T RESPOND?

If your contact with the local business is not successful, you may have to contact a regional or national office to get results. Use the same steps when contacting these offices and include documentation of your contacts with the local business. If the business is not part of a larger chain, you should contact a local consumer protection agency.

You may also want to contact a local consumer protection agency if you feel you are waiting too long for the business to react. If your area doesn't have a local agency, contact:

The Attorney General –

Consumer Protection Division

P.O. Box 30213

Lansing, MI 48909

Telephone (517) 373-1140 or

Toll-Free (877) 241-3771