

Writing a short persuasive argument: A Letter of Complaint

This assignment is about claiming your own power. It is a practical opportunity to stand up for something you believe in, to defend yourself or others against some injustice, and to initiate or restore communication with someone. This assignment will take the simple form of writing an effective argument in a short letter of complaint. In this letter, you will only need to describe what you consider to be an injustice and then communicate clearly what you want.

The Steps

1. Address the letter to a specific individual: to a friend, a parent, an elected official, a landlady, or a newspaper editor. In short, address it to someone who has some power to do something about the situation that concerns you. It may take some research to determine who this person is, but that is a key part of the assignment.
2. As you outline your letter, use neutral, descriptive, and non-blaming language to explain:
 - a. What the situation is
 - b. What is unfair about it
 - c. What you want from the other person now

Keep in mind that this assignment is to reflect an ongoing situation. In other words, you have attempted to deal with the situation before. Be certain to include information describing your previous efforts to deal with this situation and the outcomes you obtained. Your final paragraph should serve to keep the two of you connected by asking for reactions, a call, an appointment, or an agreement within a time frame that you suggest. (For instance, you might conclude by saying "I would like very much to hear what you have to say in response; I would welcome hearing from you by phone or letter. If I have not heard from you within a week, then I will call you.")

3. Use reasoning and evidence to support your case. Make your conclusions straightforward and simple. Be clear about what you want but also remain courteous and respectful.
4. The length of the body of your letter should be a minimum of 250 words; use a business letter format.

Letter of Complaint

Your paper will be evaluated as follows:

- ____ 1. Letter is addressed to a specific person who has the power to do something about the situation. +10pts.
- ____ 2. Organization is simple and clearly describes the situation and the complaint, and is requesting a specific action. +10pts.
- ____ 3. Request made that is clear and possible to fulfill. +10pts.
- ____ 4. Conclusion is clear; sufficient and adequate reasons are given. +10pts.
- ____ 5. Topic chosen involves challenge of self-control. (Describes previous attempts to deal with this issue and the results.) +20pts.
- ____ 6. Language does not blame, make guilty, or cause defensiveness. +10pts.
- ____ 7. A final connecting statement is made, requesting, but not demanding, a response within a stated period of time. +10pts.
- ____ 8. No distracting errors of punctuation, sentence structure, spelling. Minimum 250 words. Business style format. +20pts.