

English for Hospitality and Tourism TT373

Instructor:

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English for Hospitality and Tourism TT373

Course Components

A. Introduction to the Course: **The Importance of Tourism**

1. Class Discussion and Paragraph writing

Tourists spend money on visas, transportation, accommodation, restaurants, entertainment activities, and shopping.

Where do tourists spend the largest amount of their money?

In a paragraph of about 150 words, try to answer this question as if you are planning for your next vacation to be spent somewhere.

2. Based on your answer of the previous task about where the largest amount of your budget is spent on, discuss ways of improving this sector (visa processing, transportation, accommodation, restaurants, entertainment activities, or shopping) in your country.

Write your answer in a paragraph of about 150 words.

3. Can tourism boost the economy of Saudi Arabia? How?

Do you think tourism can create more job opportunities? Does it attract international investments? What kind of investments can tourism attract? What else?

Write your answer in a paragraph of about 150 words. Presentations

Assessment: Blackboard Discussion

B. Vocabulary (Technical terminology)

1. Where are they (1 &2)?
2. Accommodation types and tariffs
3. At the hotel
4. At the airport and Airline terminology
5. Basic Foods

Assessment: Assignments & a Quiz

C. Dialogue Practice:

1. Greeting Hotel Guests
2. Asking about well being
3. Chit Chatting
4. Farewells
5. Problems and Complaints

Assessment: Assignments & a Quiz

D. Letter Writing:

1. Formal Business Letter
2. Letter of Complaint
3. Response to a letter of Complaint

Assessment: Assignments

King Abdulaziz University

Faculty of Tourism

Departments of Tourism and Hospitality

Where are they (1)?

Look at these extracts from conversations, notices, etc, and decide where you would hear or read each one.

Choose from the list in the box. Underline the key words that help you decide your answer.

At the airport, At a ferry terminal, On a bus, On a cruise ship
On a safari, On a sightseeing tour, On the beach,
On an aircraft, In a pub or bar, In a hotel, In a museum,
In a restaurant, In a taxi, In a theatre, In an Internet café

Answers may be used more than once.

1. (On the phone)

Speaker 1: I'd like to order some food, please.

Speaker 2: Certainly, madam. I'll put you through to room service.

Speaker 1: Oh, and I don't seem to have any towels.

Speaker 2: I'll get housekeeping to send some up. Room 501, isn't it?

2. (Notice) This is a residential district. In the interest of our neighbours, customers are politely requested to keep noise to a minimum when leaving this establishment.

3. All passengers are requested to assemble at the muster point on deck level 3 for a lifeboat drill at half past ten. The pool, bars and restaurants will be closed for the duration of the drill. Please ensure that your cabin doors are securely locked and windows or portholes closed during the drill.

4. Speaker 1: How many bags?

Speaker 2: Just the suitcase to check in. And one piece of hand baggage.

Speaker 1: Did you pack the case yourself?

Speaker 2: I did.

Speaker 1: And could anyone have interfered with the bag since then?

5. Speaker 1: Good evening, sir. How many?

Speaker 2: Four, but I don't have a reservation.

Speaker 1: That's no problem. Would you like smoking or no smoking?

Speaker 2: I don't mind. Actually, would it be possible to seat us on the terrace?

6. I must ask everyone to stay inside the vehicle, and try not to make too much noise.

These animals are wild, remember, and can be very dangerous. We've arrived at the busiest time of the day for spotting wildlife, so there's plenty of activity. You can see two hippos on the far side of the waterhole, and....

7. Speaker 1: Could you put your seat up please, madam? We're landing shortly.

Speaker 2: Oh, right.

Speaker 1: And fold your table away as well. And raise the window blind?

8. Speaker 1: I'd like two for tonight's performance, please.

Speaker 2: We've got seats in the stalls for £20, or in the circle for £15.

Speaker 1: Can you see the stage all right from the circle?

9. Your lifejacket is situated under your seat. In the event of an emergency landing on water, place it over your head, and tie the strings around your waist. To inflate it, pull the orange toggle. There is a tube to help keep it fully inflated, a light, and a whistle for attracting attention....

10. Speaker 1: Thank you. What's the fare?

Speaker 2: That's £8.20.

Speaker 1: Here's £10. Keep the change.

11. Speaker 1: Summertown, please.

Speaker 2: Single or return?

Speaker 1: Return.

Speaker 2: That's £1.20.

Speaker 1: Here you are. Could you tell me when we get there please?

12. Speaker 1: A pint of Spitfire and a dry white wine please. Do you serve food?

Speaker 2: We do. There's a list on the board by the door. Find a table, then give me your order when you're ready

Speaker 1: That's great, thanks.

13. Speaker 1: Excuse me, I asked for well done, and this is rare.

Speaker 2: I'm sorry, madam. I'll ask the chef to put it under the grill a bit longer.

14. (On a notice): ½ hour: €1. 1 hour: €1.50. Printing; 10C per sheet. Please be careful not to spill food or drink on the keyboards. Smoking is strictly prohibited.

15. Directly in front of you are two columns, one with a statue of Saint Mark and one with a statue of Saint Theodore. Ahead and on your left is the famous Doge's Palace. Directly to our left is Saint Mark's Basilica, and the campanile on your right, which was completely rebuilt after it collapsed, can be climbed for a marvellous view of the city.

16. Speaker 1: Day return for one car and five passengers, please.

Speaker 2: If you leave on the next sailing, that will be £65. It's the peak hour, you see. The sailing after that is off-peak and will only cost you £30. You'll have to wait about an hour.

Speaker 1: OK, we'll take the second sailing. Is there somewhere here we can get a coffee?

Speaker 2: There's a café on the far side of the harbour.

17. Speaker 1: Two adults and two children please.

Speaker 2: That's £7 please. Would you like a guide? They're free.

Speaker 1: Yes please. We're particularly interested in the Egyptian section. Where is that?

Speaker 2: On this floor, go past the gift shop and the portrait gallery and turn left just before you get to the natural history section.

18. Speaker 1: How much do the deckchairs cost?

Speaker 2: €2 per hour, or €10 for the whole day. Umbrellas are €1 per hour or €5 for the day.

19. Speaker 1: What would you recommend with that, the Chablis or the Riesling?

Speaker 2: I'll get the sommelier for you sir.

Speaker 1: Thank you. And could we have some water?

Speaker 2: Certainly. Still or sparkling?

20. Speaker 1: Please take off your coat and remove all metallic objects from your pocket.

Speaker 2: And take off my watch?

Speaker 1: Yes please. You can put everything in one of these trays.

Where are they 2?

Look at these extracts from conversations, notices, etc, and decide where you would hear or read each one.

Choose from the list in the box. Underline the key words that help you decide your answer.

At the airport, At a ferry terminal, On a bus, On a cruise ship
On a safari, On a sightseeing tour, On the beach,
On an aircraft, In a pub or bar, In a hotel, In a museum,
In a restaurant, In a taxi, In a theatre, In an Internet café

1. Hello everyone, this is your captain speaking. Well, we're making good progress despite a strong headwind and yesterday's storm. Sailing conditions are generally much calmer today, but things might get a bit choppy later this evening when we enter the Kalamar Straits. Winds are southerly, force 3 to 4, and there's a good chance...

2. Speaker 1: Window or aisle?

Speaker 2: Aisle, please.

Speaker 1: There you are. 25C. Your gate number is 80. Watch the screens for a boarding time.

3. Speaker 1: Good afternoon, madam. Do you have a reservation?

Speaker 2: Yes, a double for two nights. The name's Gruchy.

Speaker 1: Thank you, Ms Gruchy. Here's your key. Take the lift to the third floor. The porter will bring your bags.

4. (On a sign) Guests are reminded that they should check out by midday on the day they leave.

5. Speaker 1: How do I get on-line?

Speaker 2: Well, first of all you need to enter the password we gave you, then click on 'New user', and then double-click on the 'Wannasurf' icon on the left of your screen.

6. Speaker 1: Don't drop that camera: you don't want to get sand in it. And keep it away from the water: if it gets saltwater in it, it'll never work again. And don't leave it lying around in the hot sun.

And try not to get any sun cream on it.

Speaker 2: Oh dear, perhaps I should just take it back to the hotel.

7. This is the minibar, and here's the menu and price list. There's a safe in the wardrobe, but we recommend that you leave extremely valuable items in one of the safety deposit boxes at reception.

Here's your phone. To get reception, press 0, to get an outside line, press 9. There's a computer internet port by the television, and...

8. Speaker 1: Two bottles of Bud, please.

Speaker 2: Are you both 18?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: I'll need to see some form of ID please.

9. In the unlikely event of a sudden drop in cabin pressure, oxygen masks will automatically drop from the overhead compartments. Pull the mask towards you, fasten it using the strap, and breathe normally. Make sure your own mask is fully attached before helping....

10. (On the phone)

Speaker 1: Would you mind making a little less noise, please? It is rather late and the other guests are complaining that they can't sleep.

Speaker 2: Oh, I'm sorry. Of course, we'll keep the noise down.

Speaker 1: Thank you sir.

11. Speaker 1: Do you allow children in here?

Speaker 2: Yes, until seven o'clock. After that, there's a special family room at the back.

Speaker 1: And do you have a no smoking section?

Speaker 2: Yes, the family room is no smoking. And we don't allow it at the bar.

12. Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I'm your captain John Grindon, and together with my first officer Tim Rogers I'll be taking you on the first leg of this flight to

Wellington. We're currently waiting for clearance for the tower, and despite a slight delay we won't miss our slot.

13. Speaker 1: Excuse me, what are all of these extra charges on my bill for?

Speaker 2: That first one is a \$5 cover charge, the second one is a 15% service charge and the third one is an 18% VAT charge.

Speaker 1: And the fourth one?

Speaker 2: That's a special \$10 charge for the spoon you put in your pocket earlier.

14. Could I ask everyone to stay together and not to wander off? It can get very busy here at this time of the day. If anyone gets separated from the group, go and wait by the cathedral entrance and I'll come to look for you. We've got a busy itinerary today, so let's get started.

15. You have a choice of two crossings. There's a normal roll-on-roll-off service at nine o'clock, and a hovercraft service at ten o'clock. The hovercraft is more expensive, but it's much quicker.

16. Speaker 1: Could you put the meter on please?

Speaker 2: I'm sorry, it's broken. It doesn't work.

Speaker 1: In that case, I want you to stop and let me out.

Speaker 2: Oh, I've just remembered. It does work. I had it fixed this morning. Silly me.

17. Speaker 1: Please put that back into the display case, madam. We don't allow visitors to touch the exhibits.

Speaker 2: But it's so beautiful. Whoops, butter fingers, I've dropped it!

Speaker 1: Oh no! That's a Chin Dynasty vase. It's over fifteen hundred years old.

Speaker 2: Oh well, at least it wasn't new.

18. Speaker 1: This is a terrible seat. I can't see the stage very well from here.

Speaker 2: Well, why don't you ask to change before the curtain goes up?

Speaker 1: It's already going up. I'll have to wait for the interval now.

Speaker 3: Shhhh! It's starting.

Accommodation types and tariffs

Exercise 1

Complete paragraphs 1 - 12 with the most appropriate word or expression from the box.

apartment, apartment hotel, boutique hotel, commercial hotel, capsule hotels
guest house, hotel garni, chalet, luxury hotel, motel, tourist hotel, villa, hostel

1. The Text we stayed at was right by the beach. It had three bedrooms (all en-suite), a beautiful living / dining room, a huge kitchen, front, back *and* roof gardens and its own swimming pool.
2. The Text we stayed at when we went skiing in Austria had two double bedrooms, a large living room with open fireplace, a small kitchen and terraces at the front and back with fantastic views over the Alps.
3. It's on the fourth floor. It has two twin rooms, a living room with a Murphy, a small kitchen, a wonderful bathroom with a spa bath, and a small balcony overlooking the swimming pool. Text

4. David and Buddug Evans are delighted to invite visitors to spend a long weekend in 'Green Briars', the most delightful Text in Llandudno. Join us for delicious home cooking, traditional comfort and a real Welsh welcome!

5. The 'Ball and Chain' is probably the most exciting and interesting Text to open in London this year. Not only is it set in the former Chingwall prison, with single, twin and double accommodation in the old cells, but all the fascinating artwork has been done by prisoners in real prisons around the country. Outstanding levels of comfort and service are guaranteed.

6. Driving when tired is one of the most common causes of accidents, so why not break your journey at the Crossways _____. Situated on the A542 between Bunnyhutch and Birdiebath, we offer a choice of comfortable rooms, including three large family rooms, two restaurants and a bar.

Ample, secure parking is also provided.

7. For people who want hotel comfort without all the hotel facilities, the _____ is probably the most suitable type of hotel accommodation. No restaurants, no bars, no pools or tennis courts, just simple, comfortable rooms.

8. If you're looking for good, cheap accommodation and don't mind sharing, I'd recommend 'Backpackers' _____ on Wytham View Street. There are three dormitories, each with 12 bunk beds, a café that serves hot drinks and good breakfasts, and the hottest showers in town! The warden is really friendly, too.

9. 'The Moathouse', a _____ outside Derringly, has been designed specifically for businessmen and women visiting the area. Accommodation is in small studio rooms which come with all the necessities for the busy business person. These include complete telephone and Internet facilities, mobile charge points, tea and coffee making facilities and fully soundproofed rooms for a good night's rest.

10. In some cities, long-stay visitors can take advantage of _____. Accommodation is in rooms or suites, each with their own kitchen and bathroom. Normal hotel services are provided, but this type of accommodation generally offers more space and flexibility than a standard hotel.

11. For visitors with healthy bank accounts, we recommend the Tam'al Dhobi, a _____ on the banks of the river. All rooms are beautifully appointed with king size beds, full bar facilities and stunning views over the river and surrounding desert. Each room even has its own butler, who will take care of your every need.

12. Holidaymakers on package holidays are usually accommodated in fairly basic (2-star) _____. The advantage of these, of course, is that they are cheap. On the other hand, they are not always comfortable, and can often be in noisy or busy surroundings. They also try to put as many guests as possible into one room: triple rooms with space-saving sofa beds, rollaways and Z-beds are common.

13. _____ were developed in Japan as a way for budget travellers to have somewhere safe and affordable to sleep; they are also called 'pod' hotels.

Exercise 2

Look at the descriptions of different accommodation types in exercise one and find words which mean:

1. A double bed which is longer and wider than usual. _____
2. A series of hotel rooms (bedroom, living room, etc) with connecting doors.

3. Two beds, one on top of the other. _____
4. A hotel room with two small beds (to accommodate two people). _____
5. A hotel room with one small bed (to accommodate one person).

6. A bed that can be used as a sofa during the day. _____
7. A bed that folds into a cupboard or the wall during the day. _____
8. A hotel room with one large bed. _____
9. A large room with several beds. _____
10. A hotel room with its own bathroom attached. _____
11. A small room containing a bed that converts to a sofa during the day.

12. A hotel room with one large bed and two small beds (to accommodate four people).

Exercise 3

The word tariff refers to the different rates of costs / charges in hotels and other temporary accommodation.

Match the names of the tariffs in the first box with their description in the second box. In most cases, more than one tariff can be used for each description.

1. all-inclusive - 2. American Plan - 3. Continental Plan - 4. bed and board
5. bed and breakfast - 6. Bermuda Plan - 7. demi-pension - 8. en pension
9. European Plan - 10. full-board - 11. half-board - 12. self catering
13. Modified American Plan

- A. You pay for the room only.
B. You pay for the room and breakfast
C. You pay for the room and two meals (breakfast and, usually, dinner)
D. You pay for the room and three meals.
E. You pay for the room, all meals and snacks, and drinks.

At the hotel

Complete the sentences with words or expressions from the box. You do not need to use all the words in the box. In some cases, more than one answer may be possible.

adjoining rooms, airport transfer, ADSL connection, balcony, bar, business centre, cashier, check in, check-in time, check out, check-out time, coffee shop, conference centre, direct-dial telephone, emergency exit, en-suite, exchange / bureau de change, gift shop, gym, heated pool, honeymoon suite, housekeeping, key card, lift / elevator, lobby, minibar, non-residents, no smoking, pay-TV, (swimming) pool, presidential suite, rack rate, reception, reception room, registration card, reservation, reservations department, residents, restaurant, room service, safe (noun), safety deposit box, sauna, tariff, tea- and coffee-making facilities, vacancies, wireless connection

1. Our well-equipped _____ has everything for the busy executive, including a photocopier, full internet facilities with _____, and _____ to keep you refreshed while you work.
2. If you would like some food brought to your hotel room, call _____, and if you need new towels or if you want your room cleaned, call _____.
3. The hotel provides a complimentary _____ for all guests, so you don't have to get a bus or taxi into town when you arrive.

4. If you arrive at a hotel and ask for a room, you usually have to pay the full _____, but you will probably get a discount if you make a _____ in advance, especially if there are a lot of _____ on the days you want to stay.

5. Would guests please note that the latest _____ is midday (12 o'clock) on the day they wish to leave.

6. Guests who have just got married might like to use the hotel's _____, although if they've really got lots of money, they could reserve the magnificent _____.

7. When you arrive at the hotel, go straight to the _____ to _____. They will ask you to fill in a _____ with your name, address and other information, and then they will give you a _____, which you need to get into your room. Take the _____ if your room is on a high floor.

8. My room's small, but there's a _____ full of drinks, chocolate and snacks (although I haven't dared to look at the _____!), a _____ where I can keep my passport and other valuables, a _____ so I can call my friends, and a _____ where I can stand outside and get a great view of the city. Oh, and there's _____ so I can watch a movie if I get bored.

9. The hotel's facilities, including the cocktail _____, the Michelin-starred _____ and the outdoor _____ (which is heated in the winter), can be used by both _____ (guests staying in the hotel) and _____ (people who are not staying in the hotel).

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Basic Foods

Exercise one:

Match the letters in column A with those in column B to make the names of basic foods. The first one in the first section has been done as an example.

Group 1: Meat and poultry

Example: *ba*___ + ___*con* = *bacon*)

A	B
<i>ba</i> ___	___mb
be___	___ef
chic___	___con
du___	___ose
go___	___ck
ha___	___re
la___	___ken

A	B
mut___	___rk
phea___	___bit
pig___	___al
po___	___son
rab___	___sant
ve___	___eon
veni___	___ton

Group 2: Fish and seafood

A	B
co___	___ring
cr___	___sel
cray___	___dock
had___	___ab
her___	___ster
lob___	___fish
mus___	___d

A	B
oys___	___lop
pla___	___mon
pra___	___ice
scal___	___na
sal___	___ter
tro___	___wn
tu___	___ut

Group 3: Vegetables

A	B
arti__	__gette
aspa__	__flower
aub__	__coli
broc__	__rot
cab__	__ragus
car__	__mber
cauli__	__bage
cour__	__choke
cucu__	__ergine

A	B
let__	__tuce
mar__	__corn
mush__	__on
oni__	__kin
pe__	__per
pep__	__room
pump__	__as
sweet__	__row
tur__	__nip

Group 4: Fruits

A	B
apri__	__wi
che__	__berry
goose__	__hee
gra__	__me
ki__	__cot
li__	__go
lyc__	__pe
man__	__rry

A	B
necta__	__rine
pl__	__berry
pe__	__um
pea__	__ch
pap__	__melon
pine__	__apple
straw__	__aya
water__	__ar

Group 5: Herbs and spices

A	B
chi__	__ger
cinn__	__in
cori__	__lic
cum__	__ander
gar__	__lli
gin__	__amon
nut__	__gano
ore__	__meg

A	B
pep__	__me
pap__	__rika
par__	__ron
rose__	__mary
saff__	__per
sa__	__eric
turm__	__ge
thy__	__sley

Group 6: Other basic foods

A	B
be__	__am
bre__	__ans
cer__	__gs
che__	__tils
cre__	__ese
eg__	__ad
len__	__eal

A	B
marg__	__ta
noo__	__hurt
oi__	__dles
oli__	__ce
pas__	__l
ri__	__ves
yog__	__arine

Exercise Two:

Unscramble the letters below to make words. Note: The capital letter is the first letter of each word.

1. Pahesatn		16. Cheees	
2. Venniso		17. Caerel	
3. Hdodcak		18. Wamterelon	
4. Muosrohm		19. Onnio	
5. Snalmo		20. Aubergine	
6. Turpni		21. Apriote	
7. Pienapple		22. Goseberory	
8. Mgarnarie		23. Paast	
9. Lesntil		24. Oliesv	
10. Baens		25. Chicenk	
11. Borccoli		26. Befe	
12. Parsley		27. Sewetcorn	
13. Cimnnaon		28. Rsoemary	
14. Ppepre		29. Slcalop	
15. Lbosrte		30. Mgano	

For reference

CHECK YOUR ENGLISH VOCABULARY FOR LEISURE, TRAVEL AND TOURISM by Rawdon Wyatt, Second Edition©, Bloomsbury Publishing A & C Black: London 2007.

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Faculty of Tourism

Department of Travel and Tourism

Greeting Hotel Guests

You should work together in pairs and read the following dialogue, one student reads the roles of the guest and the other student reads the role of the staff.

Staff: Good afternoon, welcome to The Plaza.

Guest: Hi.

Staff: How can I help you today?

Guest: I need to check in.

Staff: Of course sir, My name is Linda Hakam and I'll be your guest representative during your stay. Could I have your name please?

Guest: Freddy Benson.

Staff: Yes Mr. Benson, here you are. And how are you today?

Guest: Tired actually, it was a very long flight.

Staff: Well, I'll get you checked in as soon as possible so you can relax.

Asking About Well Being

Practice using the above conversation by having similar dialogues with a partner, one partner taking the role of the guest and the other the role of the staff. For additional practice, switch roles.

After the introductions, it is only natural to continue the conversation in some way. Many people inquire about your well-being, especially friends, acquaintances, and co-workers.

Several expressions can be used for this, and the responses to these inquiries depend on how you actually feel.

IF GOOD

How are you?	Great.
How's it going?	Couldn't be better.
How has your day been?	Fantastic.

IF SO-SO

How have you been?	Could be worse.
How's the family?	Fair to middling.
Did you have a good day?	I can't complain.

IF BAD

How do you feel?	Not too good.
How was your day?	I've had better days.
Have you had a good day?	No, it was lousy.

Chit Chatting

Ok, you have greeted the guests, completed the necessary business (such as checked the guests in, asked them to have a seat while their table is being prepared in a restaurant, or given them their order at the bar). Now what?

Chit chatting is the solution.

Chit chatting is a natural and very common form of communication between strangers. With someone you know, continuing a conversation is easy. You would naturally talk about things you both have in common, such as the job, other friends, sports, etc.

With strangers, such as guests, chit chatting becomes a little more difficult. It is harder to find common areas of interest. Also some topics should not be asked about because they would be too personal. Such topics include: Are you married? How much money do you make? What is your religion or political affiliation? These types of topics are too personal and should be avoided, unless of course the stranger brings them up first. Even then, be leery. So what can you talk about?

Below are a few safe suggestions.

Read these expressions

Is this your first trip to (... Thailand)?

Are you enjoying your stay so far?

How do you like the weather (...on the island)?

What country are you from?

What's the weather like in your country?

What have you done so far since being here?

Are you getting a lot of good photographs?

Have you been to any interesting places since you arrived?

Have you had any local dishes that you particularly like?

Have you purchased many souvenirs yet?

Have you been to many (...beaches on the island)?

Which was your favorite?

How was the flight here? (for a guest first arriving, but don't ask this if they have been in the hotel for a few days)

Note:

To continue a conversation in a natural manner it is important to listen to the other person very carefully. Many times, what they say will give you ideas about what you should say or ask next.

You should work together in pairs and read the following dialogue, one student reading the roles of the guest and the other student reading the role of the staff.

Staff: How do you like the weather on the island?

Guest: It's very hot, much hotter than I expected.

Staff: So, what's the weather like now in your country?

Guest: It's cold and snowy.

* Note that the staff's second question was a natural follow-up to what the guest first said.

Staff: (seeing a guest with numerous shopping bags): Did you have a good time shopping?

Guest: Yes, I spent all morning in Champs-Élysées.

Staff: Were you buying souvenirs for the folks back home?

Guest: That, and a few personal items.

* Note that the staff's second question is a natural follow-up from the guest's first response. Just be sure NOT to ask questions that are too personal questions such as what specifically they bought.

Farewells

After greetings, introductions, and polite conversation people will go their separate ways.

There are numerous expressions that can be used when giving farewells. Some are more formal than others. Obviously the more formal expressions are more appropriate when interacting with guests.

More Formal expressions

Goodbye

Thank you for coming. Have a pleasant day.

Goodbye, please come again.

Goodbye, I hope to see you again.

Less Formal Goodbyes

See you later (soon)

So long

I have to run

I have to be going now

Catch you later

See you again

Points to remember

The informal expressions above can be used among friends and co-workers, but would be too informal to use with guests.

Adapted from: English for the Hospitality Industry

Problems and Complaints

There will be inevitable times when guests have a problem about something and will complain about it. The kinds of problems and complaints that hotel employees are likely to encounter are as varied as the guests themselves. Sometimes these complaints will be justified, such as being brought the wrong order in a restaurant or not getting the kind of room that was booked or being over charged for a service. Sometimes the complaints will be unreasonable or petty, such as a guest demanding an upgraded room at no extra cost or becoming angry over a short delay. Whether the problem or complaint is justified or not it must be handled with dispatch and professionalism.

Possible problems or complaints

1. There are not enough towels in my room.
2. The sink is leaking in the bathroom.
3. This tread mill isn't working properly.
4. How did my child get so dirty?
5. I seem to have misplaced my tennis racket.
6. I specifically requested an ocean view, but the room I was given has a view of the pool.
7. This soup is not warm enough.
8. This fish tastes like sour milk.

9. Why is our order taking so long?

10. We have no ketchup at this table.

Responses to problems or complaints

a) I'll see to that right away ma'am.

b) I'll correct the situation immediately, sir.

c) I'm so sorry sir; that should never have happened.

d) I'll take care of that right away sir.

e) I'll see to it immediately.

f) I'll check about it and get back to you.

I have a big problem!

Work together in pairs and read the following dialogue. One student reads the role of the guest and the other student reads the role of the staff.

Bell Desk Staff

Guest: Watch that suitcase! It's new and you are scratching it.

Bell man: I'm sorry about that sir. It won't happen again.

Guest: Well I should hope not.

Engineering/Maintenance Staff

Guest: Why is it taking so long to fix that air conditioner?

Staff: It needs a new part. I called the warehouse and the part should be here in a minute. It should only take a couple of minutes to install it once it arrives and the air conditioning will be up and running.

Food and Beverage Staff

Guest: This tea is sweetened and I specifically wanted unsweetened tea.

Staff: I'm sorry ma'am*. I'll bring an unsweetened tea immediately. Please excuse the mistake.

Guest: No problem, things happen.

Staff: Here's your tea ma'am. Let me know if I can be of further assistance. Enjoy the rest of your meal.

Guest: Thank you.

*Note. Here is a link to a webpage for "Using Female Personal Titles: Miss, Mrs., Ms., Ma'am", by Dennis Oliver: http://www.eslcafe.com/grammar/using_personal_titles04.html

Front Desk Staff

Guest: When I first arrived I was assured that a bottle of Holsten* would always be in the mini-bar. Well, I'm here now and the bottle isn't. What kind of hotel are you running here anyway?

Staff: I sincerely apologize for the oversight sir. We have been exceedingly busy today because of the convention. I'll have a complimentary bottle delivered immediately. Please accept it with our compliments.

Guest: Well, I should hope it would be complimentary. Thank you. Good bye.

Health and Leisure Staff

Guest: I had a scheduled tennis game, but the court has been taken over by someone else.

Staff: Yes sir, I understand. But we have a policy that if a party is more than 15 minutes late for a starting time, we schedule the courts for other waiting guests. I'm terribly sorry, would you like to reschedule?

Housekeeping Staff

Guest: We ran out of toilet paper. Is it possible to get more?

Staff: I'm very sorry. Of course, ma'am. I'll send more up immediately. Is there anything else you require?

Guest: Now that you mention it, could you also bring up a six-pack of Heineken?

Staff: Yes ma'am, I'll call room service immediately and have them send some to your room.

Guest: That would be great, thanks.

Kitchen Staff

Guest: I requested the eggs over hard, these are over easy.

Staff: Sorry about that sir, let me make you some more right away.

Spa Staff

Guest: Ouch! Are you trying to kill me!

Staff: I'm terribly sorry sir. Am I pressing too hard?

Guest: Yes.

Staff: How's this? Is this better?

Guest: It still hurts a little.

Staff: How about now? Is this OK?

Guest: Yes, that's much better. Thank you.

Staff: Again, I'm sorry sir. Please let me know if you have any other problems sir and I'll adjust my technique as you wish.

More Problems & Complaints

Paired Practice: Practice using the expressions below by role playing the following situations with a partner, one student takes the role of the guest and the other student takes the role of a hotel staff. Then choose one complaint to write a short dialogue between a guest and a staff member.

Bell Desk Staff

Guest complains about scratched luggage

Guest complains about a piece of luggage left at the bell desk

Guest complains that his bags have not delivered to the guest's room yet

Guest complains that they waited for 10 minutes for a bell desk staff

Guest complains about suit cases being delivered to the wrong room

Guest complains about a bell staff that cannot understand the guest's request

Engineering/Maintenance Staff

Guest complains that staff took a long time to fix a leaking sink

Guest complains that staff reported to room two hours after a call was made for repairs

Guest complains of a broken TV

Guest complains that the staff made a mess of the room making a repair

Guest complains of plugged up toilet

Guest complains that door to veranda is stuck

Food and Beverage Staff

Guest complains that a side of garlic toast has not arrived

Guest complains that there's a bug in the salad

Guest complains about slow service

Guest complains about cold soup

Guest complains about having no silverware on the table

Guest complains about getting the wrong order

Guest complains about getting sugar in tea, when the guest ordered no sugar

Front Desk Staff

Guest complains about the high service charge

Guest complains about not having the suite cleaned yet

Guest complains about being charged for a mini bar beverage that he did not drink

Guest complains that the guest next to him is playing music too loud

Guest complains that the room smells like smoke

Guest complains about a delay in checking in

Health and Leisure Staff

Guest complains about not having any soap in the changing room

Guest complains about an exercise machine that does not work properly

Guest complains that her son is very dirty after an activity at the children's program.

Guest complains that his scheduled tennis court was assigned to another player because he was late.

Guest complains that the steam room smells

Guest complains that there are not enough towels in the changing room

Housekeeping Staff

Guest complains about the room not being cleaned yet

Guest complains about poor cleaning quality of the room

Guest complains about a trash can not being emptied

Guest complains about not having enough towels

Guest complains about running out of toilet paper

Guest complains about that housekeeping takes too long to clean room

Kitchen Staff

Guest complains about an overcooked steak

Guest complains about an undercooked fish

Guest complains about bad tasting food

Guest complains about overcooked vegetables

Guest complains about the chef not being willing to make a special dish

Guest complains about the soup being too salty

Spa Staff

Guest complains about getting a headache from the incense

Guest complains about it being too hot in the therapy room

Guest complains that the oil is too hot

Guest complains that the therapist is not pressing hard enough

Guest complains that the therapist is pressing too hard

Guest complains about the high cost of the products

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Problems and Complaints

Worksheet

Exercise one:

Read the statements below and match them with the complaints.

No.	Statements		Complaints
1.	My laundry hasn't been returned.		Those things were so grungy that it will be hard to get to sleep.
2.	The mini bar has not been re-stocked.		It's imperative that I keep abreast with the latest news for my job.
3.	Guest's luggage hasn't been brought up.		When will it get done, I can't sleep with the constant drip, drip, drip.
4.	The sheets haven't been changed.		They have to be done by 3:00; I can't go to a meeting with them looking like that.
5.	The carpet is dirty.		Well when will it be here; I want to take a shower and change clothes.
6.	The towels haven't been replaced.		I wish you would hurry up; trash is overflowing all over the floor.
7.	The shower hasn't been repaired.		It's disgusting; I can't even walk across the floor in my bare feet.
8.	The waste paper basket hasn't been emptied.		What am I supposed to do, try to dry off with wet, soiled towels?
9.	Guest's shoes haven't been shined.		It's already been 24 hours. I can't keep wearing dirty clothes.
10.	The TV hasn't been fixed.		Do you really expect me to go to 7-11 just to buy a couple of candy bars and a beer?

Problems and Complaints

Exercise two:

Write the correct word on the line that will complete the sentence.

talking, hurts, tastes, morning, serve, next, bottle, money, this,
take, complaining, right, happened, funny, terrible, little, neck,
pillow, apologize, waiting, problem, me

1. Yes sir, I'll _____ care of that _____ away.
2. I have a problem. This _____ is much larger than what I am used to. As a result, my _____ is very stiff this _____. Could I get a smaller one?
3. What _____ to my briefcase? I left it right _____ to the chair and now it's missing.
4. Excuse _____, this spaghetti is _____. It looks dark green and the sauce _____ like vinegar.
5. 58 baht for a _____ of water! Are you kidding me! That's way too much _____ just for water.
6. Ouch! That _____. Could you please use a _____ less pressure?
7. I _____, sir. Is _____ better?
8. I'm sorry for being late ma'am, but I was _____ with my supervisor. I hope it wasn't a _____.
9. Are you ever going to _____ us our meal? We've been _____ for over an hour.
10. Every one of that group from Germany is _____ about the accommodations. They say that the rooms are too small and they smell _____.

Problems and Complaints

Exercise three:

Match the appropriate responses with the questions by putting the correct number of the question on the line.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Could you use a little more pressure? | ___ Really! That would be great. I hate talking to airline personnel. |
| 2. This bacon is not very crispy. I specifically asked for very crispy bacon. | ___ I'll send someone up right away and have it cleaned again. |
| 3. Housekeeping did a very poor job of cleaning the bathroom. The tub is still filthy. | ___ Thank you, I appreciate that. I'm surprised it gets that cold in here. |
| 4. Mr. Kelly, did maintenance fix the problem with the sink yet? | ___ As you wish sir, how is this? |
| 5. Where's my luggage? I was told it would be here 15 minutes ago. | ___ We were playing tag out on the lawn and she fell down. Fortunately, she wasn't hurt. |
| 6. Why is my child so dirty? She has mud all over her clothes. | ___ Thanks for bringing that to my attention. Why don't you use that one and I'll have someone check this out. |
| 7. This tread mill doesn't seem to be working properly. | ___ Of course ma'am. I'll return it to the chef immediately and have him heat it up. |
| 8. I'd be happy to change the reservation for you sir. | ___ Unfortunately no, they said they have a couple of other jobs they have to complete first. It will be another 30 or 40 minutes. |
| 9. This soup is very cold, could you warm it up. | ___ Let me look into that sir and I'll call you right back. |
| 10. Here are the extra blankets you requested sir. | ___ I'm sorry about that sir. I'll get you another order right away. |

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Business Letters

Business writing styles:

- Business Letter (The most formal style is the block-style.)
- Email Format

A. Structure of a Business Letter:

1. Letterhead (your contact information)
2. Date
3. Attention line
4. Inside address (the person or company you are writing to)
5. Greeting
6. Body of the letter
7. Complimentary closing
8. Signature line

Sample structure (see page 48):

Sample business letter structure (Block style)

Letterhead (Sender's address)	ABC Company 00 Wilson Street New York, NY 040-457 Tel. (000) 0000- 0000 Email (000) 0000-0000
--------------------------------------	---

Date	July 12, 2018
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Attention line (Optional)	Confidential
-------------------------------------	--------------

Inside address (recipient's address)	Mr. Diane Warner President XYZ Company, Inc. 000 West 59 th Street Chicago, IL 000-0000
--	--

Subject line	Subject: Block-style letter
---------------------	-----------------------------

Salutation	Dear Mrs. Warner:
-------------------	-------------------

Body of letter

Complimentary close	Sincerely yours,
----------------------------	------------------

Signature line	John A. Hickman Executive Vice President
-----------------------	---

Format for Writing a Business Letter

By [Alison Doyle](#)

The following sample letter format includes the information you need to include when writing a letter, along with advice on the appropriate font, salutation, spacing, closing and signature for business correspondence.

Sample Letter Format

Contact Information *(Your contact information)*

Your Name (can be written below the signature)

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

Your Phone Number

Your Email Address

Date: American or European style

Contact Information *(The person or company you are writing to)*

Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Greeting *(Salutation Examples)*

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name: *(Use a formal salutation not a first name unless you know the person well)*

Body of Letter

When writing a letter, your letter should be simple and focused, so the purpose of your letter is clear. Single space your letter and leave a space between each paragraph. Left justify your letter. Use a plain font like Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana. The font size should be 10 or 12 points.

The first paragraph of your letter should provide an introduction as to why you are writing.

Then, in the following paragraphs, provide more information and specific details about your request or the information you are providing. Explain why you are writing so it's easy for the reader to understand what you are asking.

The last paragraph of your letter should reiterate the reason you are writing and thank the reader for reviewing your request.

Leave a blank line after the salutation, between each paragraph, and before the closing.

Closing

Best Regards, (*Closing Examples*)

Signature

Handwritten Signature (*for a hard copy letter*)

Typed Signature

<https://www.thebalance.com/sample-letter-format-2063479>

Sample Business Letter

(About a Meeting)

Company, Inc.
123 Alphabet Drive
Los Angeles, California 90002

15 November 2012

Ms. Susan Smith
Supervisor of Product Development
Pet Supply Provider, Inc.
472 Canine Road
Los Angeles, California 90002

Dear Ms. Smith:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the conference last week. As we discussed, I sincerely believe that the widget gizmo produced by Company, Inc. can greatly streamline your production process. If you are still willing, I would like to bring some of the key members of my team along with me to meet with you at Pet Supply Provider, Inc. We would like to give you an overview of our services and discuss with you the best plan to suit your needs.

Meeting in person would allow us to fully evaluate your wants and needs. Our team is available to meet any time this week or next. Please let me know, at your earliest convenience, when you would be available.

Cordially,

Sam Brown
Vice President of Company, Inc.
555-555-5555
s.brown@companyinc.com

<http://www.wikihow.com/Sample/Business-Letter-About-Meeting>

B. Structure of Business Email:

1. Date
2. Contact person or company information
3. Greeting
4. Body of the letter
5. Complimentary closing
6. Signature line

Business email sample:

Date

Name/Title

Business/Organization

Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Sir/ Madam:

We have seen your advertisement in the March issue of Business Catering Management and would be grateful if you could send us details about your catering services for medium-sized companies.

A prompt reply would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Essential Hints for Business Letter Writing:

Use single space format

Leave space between each paragraph

Left justify your letter

Use black, Times New Roman font, and its recommended size is around 12

1. Letterhead (your contact information):

- Name
- Address
- City, state zip code
- Your phone number
- Your email address

2. Date writing:

The dateline in a letter is typed three or four lines below the last line of the letterhead.

The standard dateline in the United States is different from other countries. In the US, the full name of the month (no abbreviations) is followed by the day and a comma then the year. Other countries, the Europeans for instance, they begin with the day, then the full name of the month, and finally the year.

Example:

US standard: November 15, 2018

Europe standard: 15 November 2018

Note: Do not use numerical to indicate the months. Likewise, slash or dash separating date, month and year are nonconventional. These formats 05-06-2019 *Or* 05/06/2018 should be avoided.

3.Attention Line (optional):

It is placed two lines below the dateline. The attention line is used if the notation is personal or confidential.

4. Inside address (the person or company you are writing to):

You take the contact information from their business card or the organization website.

- Name
- Position
- Address
- City, state zip code
- Phone number
- Email address

5. Body of the letter:

- a) Address the audience.
- b) Body of the letter should be short, straight to the point, and clear. (see examples below)
- c) Open the first paragraph with a sentence which hooks the reader. So, you draw their attention to the matter.
- d) Keep it positive and maintain appropriate language level. (see examples below)

Examples of keeping your sentence short:

Long	Short
One of the best things you can do for yourself to improve your writing is to learn how to cut words that are not necessary. 	To improve your writing, cut out unnecessary words. 
In this e-mail we have attempted to answer all of your questions and we hope that if you have any additional questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to contact us immediately. 	If you have any additional questions, please call us. 

Examples of using positive language:

Negative	Positive
We will not start repairing your test equipment until we receive a deposit.	We will begin repairing your test equipment once we receive a deposit.
We are unable to promote you to supervisor because you do not have the skills and experience required for this position	We will be able to promote you to supervisor when you meet the experience required for this position

For more examples see: Al Maskari, Khaled ,A practical Guide to Business Writing . Cornwall, UK (2013).

6. Closing:

Complementary closing is always recommended to end a business letter. It is written two lines below the last line of the body of the letter. Capitalize the first letter of the first word. A comma follows the closing.

Examples:

- *Formal closing:*

Yours truly, Respectfully yours,

- *Less formal:*

Sincerely, Sincerely yours,

- *Personal/Friendly closing*

Regards, Best regards, Kindest regards

7. Signature:

Companies usually set a standard signature for their employees:

- Name
- Position
- Contact information

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Letters of Complaint

Writing a formal letter of complaint remains an effective way to alert a company to a problem. This page <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/writing-help/letters-of-complaint> includes guidelines for structuring your complaint, suggestions for style, and [example letters](#).

Preparing to write

Before you begin your draft, gather all the information you will need to include in your complaint. **This information may include the time, date, and location that you purchased faulty goods or services, reference or invoice numbers, and records of previous communication with the company.** To support your complaint, you may need to **enclose copies** of documents such as receipts with your letter.

How to structure your letter of complaint

Your letter of complaint should follow the standard composition format for a formal letter.

Below the recipient's address, include a **subject line** to indicate the product or service that you are addressing in your complaint.

Subject: _____

In the first body paragraph, open with a sentence **that immediately draws the reader's attention to the matter**, e.g.:

I am writing to complain about the faulty installation of my air conditioner.

I wish to express my dissatisfaction with my stay at your hotel.

Follow the opening sentence with a **summary of the events** that prompted your complaint. Be sure to include exact dates and times, and give all the relevant information in a clear and logical sequence.

In the next paragraphs, you should **outline what steps you have taken thus far to resolve the matter and describe the consequences of the faulty product or service**.

Adding specific details, such as additional costs you have incurred to replace a faulty product, will strengthen your complaint. If you have had previous communication with the company, be sure to note it in your letter; include reference numbers where applicable.

In the final body paragraph of your letter, you should **state your expectations of how the company should resolve the matter**, including specific actions and deadlines, e.g.:

I would appreciate it if you could replace the missing part by next week.

Please let me know as soon as possible what action you propose to take.

I look forward to hearing from you within the next ten days.

Suggestion: Take a calm and focused approach

Keep your complaint focused on the exact incident that prompted your letter. Do not veer into generalized criticism of the company, and avoid personal attacks and abusive language. Even though you may be quite frustrated and angry, maintain a calm, gracious tone in your complaint. Expressing optimism that the matter will be resolved will produce a more persuasive letter than berating the reader for the company's mistakes.

Examples

See a letter of complaint about a [faulty product \(pdf\)](#) on page 3.

See a letter of complaint about [unsatisfactory workmanship \(pdf\)](#) on page 4.

See a letter of complaint about a [disappointing holiday \(pdf\)](#) on pages 5 & 6.

Structure of a Complaint Letter

Sender's
Address

Date

Recipient's
Address

Subject: _____

First body Paragraph:

- Draw the reader's attention to the matter.
- Give a summary of the events that prompted your complaint.

In the next paragraph(s):

- Outline what steps you have taken to resolve the matter.
- Describe the consequences of the faulty product or service.

In the final body paragraph:

- State your expectations of how the company should resolve the matter.
- Including specific actions and deadlines.

Closing and
Signature

8 Kennedy Circle
Sydney
NSW 2010

11 November, 2015

Customer Services Manager
Evans Electrical Products
7 Swan Street
Sydney NSW 2011

Subject: EasyIron Electric Iron (Model No. 2279)

Dear Sir or Madam:

I wish to express my dissatisfaction with the above iron, which I purchased from The Electrical Store in Newtown on 10 October, 2015. On using it for the first time, I found that the temperature control was faulty; it was not possible to set it for any temperature apart from the highest, for cotton.

When I attempted to return the iron to the store, the cashier said that the store was unable to replace it or offer me a refund but advised me that it could be sent away for repair. As I need an iron on a daily basis, and it was not clear how long a repair would take, this option was unsatisfactory. As the iron clearly does not function as it should and therefore does not comply with the legal standards of product quality, I am writing to you to ask for a full refund of the £35.99 retail price.

I look forward to hearing from you within the next two weeks.

Yours truly,

Jenny Hawkins

12 Scuttle Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 2EF

7 April, 2015

Mr Dennis Hampton
Manager
Sunshine Blinds
20 Apollo Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8JK

FIESTA BLACKOUT ROLLER SHADE

Dear Mr Hampton,

I am writing to complain about the faulty installation of the above blackout shade to my bedroom window. Mr Brand from your company came to my house to fit the shade on Monday, 29 March. That same evening, I discovered the mechanism was not working and that it was impossible either to raise or to lower the shade.

I phoned your company the following morning, and Mr Brand returned three days later to repair the shade. However, although the shade worked for the first few days after his visit, it then jammed once more. When I phoned again on 6 April to report this fault, I was told that no one would be available to visit me for two weeks.

As I regularly work nights, and this shade is the only means of blocking out daylight, it is vital that it is functioning properly so that I can sleep during the day. I therefore would appreciate it if you would ensure that someone returns to replace the shade by the end of the week.

Sincerely yours,

Patrick Bowles

5 High View
Birmingham
B15 3DA

22 August, 2010

Mr R. T. Black
Customer Service Department
Sunny Holiday Company
P.O. Box 4
Birmingham
B5 1CB

Re: Holiday reference number CT2118M

Dear Mr Black:

Following our telephone conversation earlier today, I am writing to give details of my dissatisfaction with my stay at the New Hotel, Los Christianos, Tenerife, on 10– 18 August 2010, which I booked with your company for me and my family.

My central complaint is that the hotel fell far short of the description in the brochure. We had booked two double suites, in rooms 213 and 214. Although the rooms were billed as four-star accommodation, they were very cramped, and the furnishings were worn and dirty. In addition, the shower in room 213 did not work. The hotel's grounds, described in the brochure as "pleasant, tranquil, and spacious," were in fact bordered on two sides by a very busy main road. The swimming pool was closed the entire week for repairs.

When we spoke to your representative, Tracey Mills, she promised to try to get the shower fixed, but this took an unacceptably long time to happen—three days from when we first complained. I asked her

to fill out an accommodation report form detailing these issues and I enclose a copy for your information, together with photos of the bedrooms and the hotel grounds.

As I stated in my telephone call, I feel that we are due a full refund for this hotel stay as it failed to meet the description in the brochure, and it ruined our holiday. I look forward to hearing from you within the next two weeks.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Johnson

For reference:

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/writing-help/letters-of-complaint>

Complaint Responses

As a service provider, when you receive a letter of complaint about your service, your first response may be resentment or irritation. It's only natural – nobody likes to be criticised, and having your labours faulted can feel like a personal attack. It's important to appreciate that all letters of complaint are feedback of the guest's personal experience of the service they have received.

They may be fully justified in complaining or sometimes their viewpoint may seem unreasonable – yet, irrespective of our initial feelings, all complaints give us an insight into what our guests are thinking and provide an opportunity to change the actual service if something is not working, or to provide appropriate information to change public perception, if that's the problem.

We should always provide a guest-focussed complaints service, and should be:

- **listening** to what the complainants are saying
- **responding** to the issues they raise and
- **improving** our services subsequent to the lessons learnt from our investigations into their concerns.

From receipt of the initial letter or phone call, one of the Customer Services team will contact the **complainant** to discuss their complaint. The aim is to ensure that we understand

exactly what the issues are and what the complainant is seeking as an outcome, to negotiate a binding time-frame within which the investigation and response should be completed.

The Customer Services team act to facilitate the best possible outcome to a complaint in terms of guest satisfaction. Customer Services will acknowledge each complaint, enter it in the system, seek any required consent, affirm any verbal complaints they receive and guide staff through the investigation and response if needed. Ultimately, however, ownership of the complaint lies with the service which has given rise to it.

The Dos and Don'ts of Complaint Responses

Letters of response should:

- Advise who has investigated the issues, giving name and position.
- Confirm what the issues are and provide a clear, open and honest answer to each one in turn.
- Explain what happened and why, offer an apology, advise what lessons have been learnt and what we are going to do about it (and possibly, by when).
- Not use any jargon (technical terminology) but if it is essential, then provide a layman's explanation of what it means.
- Not use any abbreviations or shortened words such as 'eg', 'it's' or 'admin'.
- Not use an acronym unless it is explained on the first occasion of its use. For example, Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS).

- Ideally, not use bullet points, numbered points or titles. The letter should be personal and not read like a report. The exception to this rule is if the complainant has used this style and it would be beneficial to respond likewise.
- Advise complainants that they can report to the concerned government authorities if they remain dissatisfied with the offered resolution.
- Include contact details for the appropriate manager in case the complainant should want to discuss any issues raised in the letter with them, upon its receipt.

It sounds obvious, but empathise with the complainant and consider how you would feel if you received the proposed response letter. Is there anything in there that would cause further distress or annoyance? Can anything be misinterpreted? Is there anything left unanswered? Is the answer rather vague? Would you feel satisfied with this response and believe that they had taken your complaint seriously? If you feel that it has been fully answered in the appropriate tone, then it's time to be sent out.

Keep in mind that...

1. Most complaints do not fundamentally relate to the service itself but to the attitude (perceived or otherwise) and communication (lack of/incorrect). Staff lead busy lives and there have been many complaints where it is the throw-away comment made by the busy staff member that has remained with the complainant. The excellent service received is forgotten or unnoticed as the attitude of the staff member supersedes all other memories. It should be noted that politeness (in terms of understanding the customer's needs) and good communication at the time of service delivery might have avoided the entire complaint. Therefore, it is worth revisiting the principles of good customer care from time to time.

2. For every complaint received, there may well be other people who have experienced the same situation but have chosen not to write in or telephone. A service may receive only few complaints but if the complaints are on a similar theme, then there is likely to be a significant problem that needs addressing.

3. It is almost agreed-upon that if a company receives no complaints, then it is most likely that they are not operating a customer focused/friendly/accessible complaints process. It should be remembered that not everyone finds it easy to make a complaint.

4. Complaints are only one type of customer feedback. It has been shown that good quality complaint handling and responses can create a strong, positive attitude towards the company receiving the complaint. So those making the complaints today could be providing the compliments of tomorrow.

Adapted from the customer service guidance and publications of the southern health organizations in England.