

## Writing a Letter of Complaint

Teaching time: 75 minutes

Target students: Immigrant & refugee development center in CA; Adult ESL High-Intermediate

1. What are you teaching?

- **Language skills:** Writing
- **Skill focus:** Formal letter of complaint—appealing to landlord for repairs

2. What are your Student Learning Objectives for the lesson?

**By the end of the lesson, SWBAT** ask a landlord for repairs by writing a letter of complaint in which they must specify whom they are addressing [name of landlord or entity], describing when/where/what happened, explaining how it should be fixed, stating what will happen if it is not fixed, and providing a signed salutation line.

3. When/how in the lesson will I check students' progress toward the above Learning Objectives? What behaviors/activities will show me whether they have mastered the material?

- Ss will be able to identify the information points included in a complaint letter
- Ss will be able to identify where within the structure of the letter to fill in specific information related to their problem
- Ss will be able to arrange the parts of a complaint letter in the correct order
- Ss will write their own letter of complaint given a set of set of conditions to write about

4. Preliminary considerations:

a. *What do students already know in relation to today's lesson?*

- Relevant vocab (household objects/nouns; adjectives) & grammar for describing problems (*is/are + adjective; keep(s) + gerund [repetitive action]; need(s) + gerund; need(s) + passive infinitive*)
- Steps tenants take for appealing to a landlord for repairs
- Other housing-related rights; option to take legal action

b. *What aspects of the lesson do you anticipate your students might find challenging/difficult?*

- Ss might have difficulty sticking with the grammatical structures & vocabulary they have already learned to describe problems
- Ss might have trouble understanding the pragmatic implications underlying certain structures within a complaint letter, or might want to directly translate pragmatic structures from their L1 into their letter

c. *How will you avoid and/or address these problem areas in your lesson?*

- I will identify the parts of the letter with the Ss

- I will give several examples of a complaint letter so that Ss can familiarize with the structure
- I will give Ss several opportunities to engage in pair and group work so they can learn from each other

## 5. Procedure

| Step | Time | EIF | Activities  | Interaction         | Purpose of Activity  |
|------|------|-----|---|---------------------|--|
| 1    | 5    | E   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T briefly recreates activity from previous lesson, in which Ss are given a picture on the PPT and asked to describe the featured item's problem using <i>noun + is/are + adjective</i></li> <li>2. T reviews with Ss what steps they should take in order to appeal to a landlord for repairing the problem in the previous activity (1-phone call/in-person contact; 2-formal letter of complaint [photocopied]; 3-follow-up letter of complaint if unaddressed; 4-contacting a lawyer/other action)</li> <li>3. T tells Ss that today they will learn how to write a letter of complaint to a landlord for repairs</li> </ol> <p><b><u>PPT Slide: Describing Problems &amp; Suggesting Solutions Grammar Activity</u></b></p> | T-Ss                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a comfortable environment and build rapport with the Ss</li> <li>• Draw upon what has been taught in previous lessons to activate Ss' background knowledge</li> </ul>                  |
| 2    | 10   | E   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T distributes <u>Sample Letter Q &amp; A Worksheet</u> (wh- Qs eliciting information about the content of the letter) and first has Ss read the questions on the worksheet individually</li> <li>2. T asks Ss to read <u>Sample Complaint Letter #1</u> on PPT slide and then answer the questions on the worksheet</li> <li>3. After Ss have finished, Ss are paired off to compare their answers by reading them aloud to one another, then switch partners to compare again</li> <li>4. Show answers to the questions on a PPT slide underlining the answers where they appear in the letter</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Sample Letter Q&amp;A Worksheet</u></b><br/><b><u>PPT Slide: Sample Complaint Letter #1</u></b></p>         | T-Ss<br>S-S<br>S-Ss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposes Ss to writing sample that can serve as a model when they write their letters at the end of the lesson</li> <li>• Promoting a comfortable environment through peer learning</li> </ul> |
| 3    | 10   | E/I | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T groups Ss into fours and asks each group to take out a piece of paper and something to write with</li> <li>2. T tells groups to look at the sample letter and the worksheet in the previous activity and work together to find the different kinds of information that are included in the letter then and have one student in each group list their ideas on their paper</li> </ol>  | T-Ss                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage learner autonomy</li> </ul>   |

|   |    |   |  |                      |   |
|---|----|---|--|----------------------|---|
|   |    |   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T models task for Ss by reading writing one or two ideas on the whiteboard</li> <li>Afterwards, T has one S from each of the groups come up and write their ideas on the whiteboard</li> <li>T highlights the information that will be used in the lesson, and adds any information that was not mentioned by any of the groups but is used in the lesson</li> <li>Ss write down highlighted information for their reference</li> </ol>   | Ss-Ss                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss show what they already know/have learned about the topic</li> </ul>   |
| 4 | 10 | I | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T has Ss pair up and passes out <u>Complaint Letter Information Organizer</u> for each pair</li> <li>Ss discuss the order in which the information points [highlighted on the whiteboard in the previous activity; which they should have written down for their reference] should be presented in a letter of complaint to a landlord (top→bottom; first→last)</li> <li>T has pairs combine with another pair (now a group of four) and share their answers</li> <li>T shows answers on a PPT slide for Ss to check and write down for their reference; T then shows the Sample Complaint Letter shown at the beginning of the lesson and highlights each relevant information point for the Ss to see the order in which it occurs in a letter format</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Complaint Letter Information Organizer</u></b><br/> <b><u>PPT Slide: Sample Complaint Letter #1.5</u></b></p> | S-S<br>Ss-Ss         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss will be able to show their understanding of the structural organization of a complaint letter</li> </ul>  |
| 5 | 10 | I | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss are separated into pairs and shown <u>Sample Complaint Letter #2</u> on a PPT slide and asked to find which of the information points mentioned in the previous activities are not shown in the letter</li> <li>Pairs briefly compare their answers with the pair next to them</li> <li>T goes over &amp; highlights each information point in the letter, and then ask Ss which information point was missing</li> <li>T asks Ss where this information should be located in the sample letter and then provides a completed version of the letter with the missing information included in the correct location</li> </ol> <p><b><u>PPT Slide: Sample Complaint Letter #2</u></b></p>  | S-S<br>Ss-Ss<br>T-Ss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of necessary information in a complaint letter</li> <li>Ss will recognize the form in which information is presented in a complaint letter</li> </ul> |

|   |    |   |  |                            |   |
|---|----|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| 6 | 10 | I | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ss are given <u>Ordering the Complaint Letter Worksheet</u>, and are asked to put the segments of a sample complaint letter provided on the worksheet into the correct order</li> <li>2. Ss then check their answers with a partner, and then switch partners and check again</li> <li>3. T shows answers on PPT, and then asks Ss to rewrite the letter in the correct order in the space provided on the worksheet</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Ordering the Complaint Letter Worksheet</u></b></p>   | <p>S<br/>S-S<br/>Ss-Ss</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss will be able to show their understanding of the structural organization of a complaint letter</li> <li>• Ss recreate a complaint letter, focusing on the organization of the information</li> </ul> |
| 7 | 15 | F | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T asks Ss to take out a piece of paper and something to write with and provides Ss with a picture of a problem in a home (similar to first activity) on a PPT slide</li> <li>2. Ss create the circumstances for the picture provided (place, time, how it happened, etc.) and write a letter of complaint to a landlord asking for repairs based on the information in the picture as well as the information that the students create</li> <li>3. Ss pair up and read one another's letters to ensure that they include all of the necessary information in the correct order, and then switch partners and read again</li> </ol> | <p>S<br/>S-S</p>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss demonstrate their comprehension and mastery of the writing task</li> <li>• SLO is observed</li> </ul>   |

Sample Letter Q & A

Please write your answers to the questions below in complete sentences.

Example:

*Who is writing this letter?*

*Dr. Liu is writing this letter.*

1. To whom is Dr. Liu writing this letter?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Where does Dr. Liu live?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the problem that Dr. Liu is having?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What will Dr. Liu do if her landlord does not answer her?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. When did the problem happen?

\_\_\_\_\_

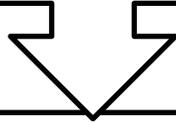
6. What does Dr. Liu want her landlord to do in order to fix the problem?

\_\_\_\_\_

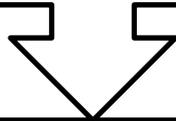
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint Letter Information Organizer

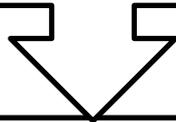
1.



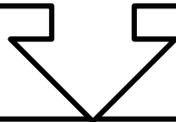
2.



3.



4.



5.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Put the Complaint Letter in Order**

Apt. #616  
(000) 000-0000  
ung@fake.not

If you do not have my ceiling fan fixed by next month, I will move out early.

Sincerely,  
Loung Ung

Last week, the ceiling fan in my living room stopped working, and now it is very hot in my apartment.

Dear Mrs. Briggs,

Please either fix or replace my ceiling fan as soon as possible so my apartment can be livable during this hot summer.

---

---

---

---

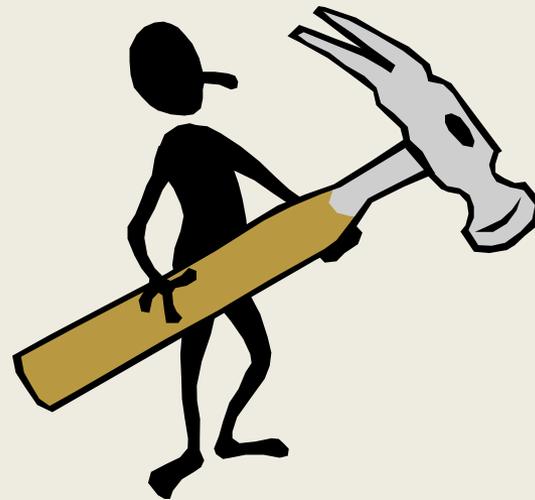
---

---

---

---

# Complaint Letter: Asking a Landlord for Repairs



**JJ HILLIARD**  
**SPRING 2013**

# Describe the problem!



The oven's door broke off.

# Review! Can you remember steps?



1. Tell your landlord about the problem.
2. Write a letter of complaint to your landlord.
  - Photocopy your letter and send one copy to your landlord.
3. If your landlord does not answer, write **another** letter of complaint to your landlord.
  - Photocopy your letter and send one copy to your landlord.
4. If your landlord still does not answer you, tell a lawyer about your problem.
  - Show the lawyer the complaint letters you wrote to your landlord.



# Read the questions by yourself 😊



1. To whom is Dr. Liu writing this letter?
2. Where does Dr. Liu live?
3. What is the problem that Dr. Liu is having?
4. What will Dr. Liu do if her landlord does not answer her?
5. When did the problem happen?
6. What does Dr. Liu want her landlord to do in order to fix the problem?



Dear Mr. Harvey,

On Monday morning in my kitchen, my oven's door broke off. Please fix it or replace it so that I can cook my food again. If I do not receive an answer from you within one week, I will contact a lawyer about this problem.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Min Liu

Apt. #410  
(000) 000-0000  
doctaliu@fake.not

# Sample Letter Worksheet Answers



1. She is writing to her landlord, Mr. Harvey.
2. She lives in apartment #401.
3. Her oven's door broke off.
4. She will contact a lawyer about the problem.
5. Her oven's door broke off on Monday morning.
6. She wants her landlord to fix or replace the oven.

# What kind of information is needed?



Dear Mr. Harvey,

On Monday morning in my kitchen, my oven's door broke off. Please fix it or replace it so that I can cook my food again. If I do not receive an answer from you within one week, I will contact a lawyer about this problem.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Min Liu

Apt. #410  
(000) 000-0000  
doctaliu@fake.not

# Information for a Complaint Letter



# How do we organize our information?



1. Whom you are writing to (his/her name)
2. When the problem happened
3. Where the problem happened
4. What the problem is
5. What the landlord should do to fix the problem
6. What you will do if your landlord does not solve your problem
7. Who you are and how to contact you

Dear Mr. Harvey,

On Monday morning in my kitchen, my oven's door broke off. Please fix it or replace it so that I can cook my food again. If I do not receive an answer from you within one week, I will contact a lawyer about this problem.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Min Liu

Apt. #410  
(000) 000-0000  
doctaliu@fake.not