

**Problems and complaints emails politeness competition**

*What is wrong with all the phrases below?*

**Emails with problems and complaints****Opening line giving the (general) topic of the complaint**

About...

**Body of the complaint email****Explaining the problem or complaint**

... was absolutely awful.

I'm absolutely furious about...

What I was told about the course was total rubbish.

**Asking for action**

..., so please sort it out ASAP.

Give me a full refund.

**Closing an email with problems or complaints**

I expect to hear from you ASAP.

I'll be much happier when you've done this. Don't forget!

**Emails dealing with problems and complaints****Opening line mentioning the other person's complaint**

It was great to get your complaint!

About your complaint,...

**Apologising**

Whoops!

**Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)**

You poor thing!/ Poor you!/ What a bummer!

**Giving reasons for the problem**

Obviously, it was because of...

Someone totally forgot to...

**Negative replies/ Giving bad news**

Sorry, but...

That is totally impossible.

**Asking for more information about the problem or complaint**

That's not enough information. You need to tell me more.

**Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)**

What about...?

**Offering future action**

You can have a 25% refund, but not a penny more.

Don't worry, won't happen again.

**Closing line for an email dealing with problems or complaints**

OK?

Like I said, we are very very very sorry.

Any more problems, just let me know.

Please don't write again until I've sorted this out.

*All the phrases above are likely to be too informal for your emails dealing with problems and complaints. Choose one of the phrases above and take turns making more and more polite versions until one of you gives up or says something that is less formal than the last thing that was said. Discuss which of those phrases is probably best in real life, then choose another phrase and do the same thing.*

*Rank the examples in each section below from 1 for the most casual/ most informal/ most impolite/ rudest to 3, 4, 5 or 6 for the most polite/ most formal.*

## Formal and informal phrases to rank

### Emails with problems and complaints

#### Opening line giving the (general) topic of the complaint

- About...
- I am writing to you regarding...
- I'm writing to you about...
- Re:...

#### Body of the complaint email

##### Explaining the problem or complaint

- ... did not meet the high standards that I had come to expect.
- ... did not meet the standards that I expected.
- ... was absolutely awful.
- ... was not acceptable.
- ... was terrible.
  
- I'm absolutely furious about...
- I'm not entirely satisfied with...
- I'm not satisfied with...
- I'm very unhappy about...
  
- What I was told about the course does not seem to be totally accurate.
- What I was told about the course was not right.
- What I was told about the course was not totally accurate.
- What I was told about the course was total rubbish.
- What I was told about the course was wrong.

##### Asking for action

- ..., so please sort it out ASAP.
- Can you therefore sort it out as soon as possible?
- Therefore, could you check the situation and get back to me as soon as you can?
  
- As is written in the contract, I am due a full refund.
- Give me a full refund.
- Given that situation, I think I am due a refund.
- In this kind of situation, I believe I am due some kind of a refund.
- Please give me a full refund.

##### Closing an email with problems or complaints

- I expect to hear from you ASAP.
- I'm looking forward to hearing from you.
- Looking forward to hearing from you.
  
- Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.
- Cheers.
- I'll be much happier when you've done this. Don't forget!
- Thanks a lot.
- Thanks.

## **Emails dealing with problems and complaints**

### **Opening line mentioning the other person's complaint**

- It was great to get your complaint!
- Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.
- Thanks for letting me know.
- Thanks for your email.
  
- About your complaint,...
- Re: the matter that you wrote about,...
- Regarding the issue which you informed me about,...

### **Apologising**

- First of all, let me say how sorry I am for...
- I'm really sorry about...
- Please accept our apologies for...
- Sorry about...
- Sorry!!
- Whoops!

### **Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)**

- I'm sorry to hear that.
- I'm very sorry to hear about...
- You poor thing!/ Poor you!/ What a bummer!

### **Giving reasons for the problem**

- As you can imagine, the reason was...
- As you might have guessed, this was due to...
- Obviously, it was because of...
  
- ... didn't remember to...
- ... doesn't seem to have remembered to...
- Someone totally forgot to...

### **Negative replies/ Giving bad news**

- I regret to inform you that...
- I'm afraid...
- Sorry, but...
- Unfortunately,...
  
- That is not possible.
- That is not really possible.
- That is totally impossible.

### **Asking for more information about the problem or complaint**

- Before dealing with your situation, we need some more details on what exactly...
- Before replying, I need some more info on what happened.
- In order to deal with this properly, can I just check exactly what the problem was?
- That's not enough information. You need to tell me more.

**Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)**

- Have you thought about...?
- How about...?
- The best solution is probably...
- What about...?

**Offering future action**

- We are delighted to be able to offer you a 25% refund.
- We are happy to be able to offer you a 25% refund.
- We can offer you a 25% refund.
- You can have a 25% refund, but not a penny more.
- You can have a 25% refund.
  
- Don't worry, won't happen again.
- Please don't worry, it won't happen again.
- Please rest assured that this will not reoccur.
- We'll make sure that this is the last time that this happens.

**Closing line for an email dealing with problems or complaints**

- Does that sound okay?
- I hope that is acceptable with you.
- OK?
- Sound OK?
  
- Again, please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.
- As I said, really sorry about all that.
- Like I said, we are very very very sorry.
- Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.
  
- Any more problems, just let me know.
- If there are any further problems, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- If there are any more problems, please contact me.
- If there are any more problems, please let me know.
  
- Please don't write again until I've sorted this out.
- Thank you for your patience.
- Thanks for your patience.

*Check as a class or with the suggested answers below.*

### **Suggested answers**

*Many other more polite phrases are possible, so please ask if you thought of something different during the game.*

### **Emails with problems and complaints**

#### **Opening line giving the (general) topic of the complaint**

1. About...
2. Re:...
3. I'm writing to you about...
4. I am writing to you regarding...

#### **Body of the complaint email**

##### **Explaining the problem or complaint**

1. ... was absolutely awful.
2. ... was terrible.
3. ... was not acceptable.
4. ... did not meet the standards that I expected.
5. ... did not meet the high standards that I had come to expect.

1. I'm absolutely furious about...
2. I'm very unhappy about...
3. I'm not satisfied with...
4. I'm not entirely satisfied with...

1. What I was told about the course was total rubbish.
2. What I was told about the course was wrong.
3. What I was told about the course was not right.
4. What I was told about the course was not totally accurate.
5. What I was told about the course does not seem to be totally accurate.

##### **Asking for action**

1. ..., so please sort it out ASAP.
2. Can you therefore sort it out as soon as possible?
3. Therefore, could you check the situation and get back to me as soon as you can?

1. Give me a full refund.
2. Please give me a full refund.
3. As is written in the contract, I am due a full refund.
4. Given that situation, I think I am due a refund.
5. In this kind of situation, I believe I am due some kind of a refund.

##### **Closing an email with problems or complaints**

1. I expect to hear from you ASAP.
2. Looking forward to hearing from you.
3. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

1. I'll be much happier when you've done this. Don't forget!
2. Cheers.

3. Thanks.
4. Thanks a lot.
5. Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

### **Emails dealing with problems and complaints**

#### **Opening line mentioning the other person's complaint**

1. It was great to get your complaint!
  2. Thanks for your email.
  3. Thanks for letting me know.
  4. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.
- 
1. About your complaint,...
  2. Re: the matter that you wrote about,...
  3. Regarding the issue which you informed me about,...

#### **Apologising**

1. Whoops!
2. Sorry!!
3. Sorry about...
4. I'm really sorry about...
5. First of all, let me say how sorry I am for...
6. Please accept our apologies for...

#### **Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)**

1. You poor thing!/ Poor you!/ What a bummer!
2. I'm sorry to hear that.
3. I'm very sorry to hear about...

#### **Giving reasons for the problem**

1. Obviously, it was because of...
  2. As you can imagine, the reason was...
  3. As you might have guessed, this was due to...
- 
1. Someone totally forgot to...
  2. ... didn't remember to...
  3. ... doesn't seem to have remembered to...

#### **Negative replies/ Giving bad news**

1. Sorry, but...
  2. I'm afraid...
  3. Unfortunately,...
  4. I regret to inform you that...
- 
1. That is totally impossible.
  2. That is not possible.
  3. That is not really possible.

**Asking for more information about the problem or complaint**

1. That's not enough information. You need to tell me more.
2. Before replying, I need some more info on what happened.
3. Before dealing with your situation, we need some more details on what exactly...
4. In order to deal with this properly, can I just check exactly what the problem was?

**Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)**

1. What about...?
2. How about...?
3. Have you thought about...?
4. The best solution is probably...

**Offering future action**

1. You can have a 25% refund, but not a penny more.
  2. You can have a 25% refund.
  3. We can offer you are 25% refund.
  4. We are happy to be able to offer you a 25% refund.
  5. We are delighted to be able to offer you are 25% refund.
- 
1. Don't worry, won't happen again.
  2. Please don't worry, it won't happen again.
  3. We'll make sure that this is the last time that this happens.
  4. Please rest assured that this will not reoccur.

**Closing line for an email dealing with problems or complaints**

1. OK?
  2. Sound OK?
  3. Does that sound okay?
  4. I hope that is acceptable with you.
- 
1. Like I said, we are very very very sorry.
  2. As I said, really sorry about all that.
  3. Again, please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.
  4. Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.
- 
1. Any more problems, just let me know.
  2. If there are any more problems, please let me know.
  3. If there are any more problems, please contact me.
  4. If there are any further problems, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- 
1. Please don't write again until I've sorted this out.
  2. Thanks for your patience.
  3. Thank you for your patience.



**Brainstorming stage**

*Without looking above for now, brainstorm at least two suitable phrases into the spaces below for each of the functions given. Suitable informal phrases are also okay as long as they have the function given and aren't actually rude/ impolite.*

**Emails with problems and complaints****Opening line giving the (general) topic of the email****Explaining the problem or complaint****Asking for action****Closing an email with problems or complaints****Emails dealing with problems and complaints****Opening line****Apologising****Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)****Giving reasons****Negative replies/ Giving bad news****Asking for more information about the problem or complaint****Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)****Talking about actions to deal with or make up for the problem****Closing line for an email dealing with problems or complaints**

*Look above, brainstorm more, then compare your extra ideas as a class or with a list of phrases.*