

WRITING

A LETTER OF COMPLAINT; LEARN TO USE FORMAL WRITTEN LANGUAGE

7 A Work in pairs and discuss. In what circumstances would you write a letter of complaint or make an official complaint? Have you ever done this? What happened?

B Read the letter and answer the questions.

- 1 Who is the letter to?
- 2 Why is the writer complaining?
- 3 What does she want to achieve?



LaGrande Travel Agency
1422 La Grande Avenue
Hartwood, 03735

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing with regard to the misuse of a personal photograph of myself and two of my friends on your website.

The photograph in question is one I posted on my personal blog several months ago, and it involves my friends and I celebrating the end of the examination period at university. Several days ago, I was shocked to discover that my photo had been used in an online advertisement for your study abroad programme. This is both unfair and illegal, as you have been using the photograph without my permission, and as you are advertising a product with it, you are in fact using it for personal gain.

I have taken up this matter with a lawyer, who has advised me to contact you in writing. She has also indicated what further steps might be taken should you fail to respond promptly and appropriately.

To resolve this matter, I request that you remove the photograph without delay. In addition, I ask that you issue a statement of your policy regarding use of images that are not your property.

Please contact me within one week of the date of this letter to confirm that these steps have been taken. If you need to reach me by telephone, my number is (0141) 985-001.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Charlene Jones

Charlene Jones (Ms)

C Put the parts of a letter of complaint a)–f) into a possible order. Then check your ideas with the order in the letter above.

- a) explain what you have done so far
- b) give a time frame for action and a way of contacting you
- c) state the overall reason for writing, in one sentence 1
- d) write a polite closing comment
- e) ask for specific action from the person/company you are writing to
- f) give additional detail about the reason for writing

8 A Find the formal phrases in the letter that match the informal phrases below.

- 1 Get in touch soon to let me know that you've done something.
- 2 To put things right, I want you to ...
- 3 I'm writing about
- 4 With best wishes
- 5 Thanks for dealing with this problem quickly.
- 6 I've already discussed the problem

B In the last four paragraphs of the letter, circle the passive verbs and underline the active ones. Why does the writer choose each?

speakout TIP

A letter of complaint should follow 'The Four Cs'. It should be: concise, clear, constructive and considerate. Reread the letter. Does it follow the rules of 'The Four Cs'?

9 A Plan a letter of complaint.

- 1 Read the notes below and choose one of the situations.
- 2 Decide what you want to achieve in the letter.
- 3 Make notes on the content of each paragraph.

Situation 1

Your neighbours / new burglar alarm / alarm gone off three times / neighbours away / tried to talk to them / too busy

Write a letter of complaint to your neighbours.

Situation 2

Recently you parked car / thought it was legal / returned / parking fine / no-parking sign behind tree

Write a letter of complaint to your local council.

B Write the letter (120–180 words).

C Check the grammar, spelling and punctuation of your letter.

D Exchange your letter with another student. Check that he/she has:

- followed 'The Four Cs'.
- used paragraphs well.
- used a formal style.