

Writing a formal letter

1 Look at the letter below, and then answer the comprehension questions.

January 16th 2007

The Manager
Browne's Grill
509 Gilman Blvd
Grand Forks, ND 58201

Dear Sir,

I am writing in regard to a meal I had at your restaurant on Tuesday, January 14th.

I had made a reservation for three people several weeks in advance. However, upon arrival at your restaurant, there was no record of my reservation. We were forced to wait nearly forty-five minutes for a vacant table, and your staff did not seem very apologetic.

The meal we ordered was a total disgrace. The vegetables were overcooked, and my roast duck was so tough that I could hardly eat it. Furthermore, the service was shockingly slow. Considering the price of a meal at your restaurant, your customers deserve much better.

I had made the reservation at your restaurant in order to celebrate my mother's 70th birthday. We were looking forward to an enjoyable meal. However, we were left thoroughly disappointed. I was unable to complain at the time, because we were running late for a theater performance. However, I would like to request a refund for the meal.

I have enclosed a copy of the receipt. If you have any questions, I can be contacted by telephone at (0425) 445-8734 or by email at p_thompson@rczk.com.

I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Peter Thompson
4097 202 Avenue NW,
Dickinson
ND 58601

enc. Copy of receipt for meal

2 Comprehension Questions

1. Who is Peter Thompson writing to?
2. When did he make the reservation?
3. Why is Peter angry with the restaurant?
4. What does he want the restaurant manager to do?

3 Vocabulary Building Match the spoken English words and phrases to the formal version.

Formal / Written

in regard to
 a disgrace
 in advance
 apologetic
 furthermore
 enclose
 at the earliest opportunity

Spoken / Casual

sorry
 earlier
 as quickly as possible
 put in the envelope
 also
 about
 terrible

4 Vocabulary Building Change these sentences to make them more formal.

1. The manager was very sorry.
2. Please contact me as soon as you can.
3. I made a reservation three days before.
4. I'm writing about our phone call yesterday.
5. Johnny's exam results were really bad!
6. I am putting a copy of the report in the envelope with this letter.

5 Task Write a short letter of complaint.

Situation: You bought a music CD by mail order. However, the CD arrived scratched, and you can't play it.

Purchase Information:

CD Title: *Classic Hits of the 60s*
 Cost: \$12.99
 Bought from: *Direct CDs, 24 Maple Tower, Connecticut, 10927*

Task: Write a letter to the mail order company. Send the CD back, and ask for a refund.

Analysis of a formal letter.

Look at the letter below, and label the parts from box underneath.

- ② _____
- Dear Sir,
- Dear Mr. Thompson,
- Dear Ms. Harrison,
- ④ _____
- I am writing in regard to ...
- ⑤ _____
- I have enclosed...
- If you have any questions...
- I look forward to hearing from you.
- ⑥ _____
- Sincerely,

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- ① _____
- ③ _____
- ⑦ _____
- ⑧ _____

Labels

- List of Enclosed Documents
- Formal Greeting
- Your Name and Address
- Introducing the Topic
- Date
- Signing Off
- Receiver's Address
- Common Closing Phrases

Writing a Formal Letter: Teacher's Notes

Target Structure:	Formal Written English
Vocabulary:	General (US Version)
Level:	Intermediate
Time:	Varies (includes homework)
Preparation:	None

Suggested Teaching Method

This worksheet looks at some of the language used when writing letters. As well as looking at more formal language, there is an analysis of the layout and structure of a letter, including set phrases used at the start and finish.

The lesson rounds off with a writing task, which can either be done in the lesson, or set as homework.

There is an alternative British-English version of this worksheet available for download.

- Direct students to the title. As a warm-up you could set a couple of questions. (e.g. 'What was the last letter you wrote?' or 'Have you ever complained about a product or service?') Give one or two examples yourself.

Direct students to the letter and the comprehension questions. You could set the scene that this is a letter of complaint.

Tell the students to read the letter quickly, underlining any problem vocabulary, and moving on.
- Students can ask and answer the comprehension questions in pairs. Alternatively, they could write the answers.
- Establish the idea of spoken/casual words, and more formal/written words. If necessary, give an example. (e.g. 'I attended a meeting.' = 'I went to a meeting.')

Students can work alone on this exercise, and then check in pairs. Go through the answers with the entire class.
- Depending on your students' level, there are several ways you could teach this. The easiest method is for students simply to substitute words from exercise three into the sentences. If your students need more of a challenge, have them study the words in exercise three for one minute, and then cover the vocabulary before proceeding with exercise four.

Students can either work alone, or in pairs. Go through the answers with the group

Analysis of a formal letter

This exercise gives you a chance to teach the key points of a business letter.

Before students complete this exercise, you may want to go through the original letter from exercise one. Answer any pressing vocabulary questions, and draw your students' attention to the layout, and some of the fixed phrases.

To check comprehension, students can then work on the analysis exercise, and check in pairs.

- This exercise is best typed up as homework. It may be a good idea for students to double-space the body of the letter, since this will give you room to write in corrections.

Answer Key (Other answers may be possible.)

- 2
1. He is writing to the manager of Browne's Grill.
 2. He made the reservation two weeks in advance.
 3. He is angry because the restaurant lost his reservation, and he had to wait almost forty-five minutes for a table. They were unapologetic. In addition, the food and service were bad.
 4. He wants the manager to refund his cost of the meal.

- 3
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Formal / Written</p> <p>in regard to
a disgrace
in advance
apologetic
furthermore
enclose
at your earliest opportunity.</p> | <p>Spoken / Casual</p> <p>about
terrible
earlier
sorry
also
put in the envelope
as quickly as possible</p> |
|---|---|

- 4
1. The manager was very *apologetic*.
 2. Please contact me *at your earliest opportunity*.
 3. I made a reservation three days *in advance*.
 4. I am writing *in regard to our telephone conversation* yesterday.
 5. Johnny's *examination* results were a *disgrace*.
 6. I am *enclosing* a copy of the report with this letter.

2 Formal Greeting

4 Introducing the Topic

5 Common Closing Phrases

6 Signing Off

1 Date

3 Receiver's Address

7 Your Name and Address

8 List of Enclosed Documents

Updated 7/2/2007