

How to file a complaint

You need to complain effectively in order to get results. Once you are certain that you have a problem you can't solve alone, complain—and do it quickly. The faster you complain, the better your chances for a satisfactory settlement.

- Pursue your complaint promptly.
- Go to the seller first, taking the merchandise along if possible. Talk to the person who sold you the product or service. If this person cannot help you, ask to speak with a supervisor, then the store manager or owner.
- Identify yourself.
- Be calm, courteous and friendly. Do not threaten.
- Explain the problem clearly. Be specific as to what you want—a replacement, a refund or repairs. Fill out a consumer complaint form and take a **copy** of it with you. If you don't have a form, call the Bureau of Consumer Protection at: (800) 422-7128.
- Be prepared. Have copies of documents in order; contracts, warranties, receipts, advertisements, canceled checks, charge slips. Provide copies, but keep originals.

- Get names of everyone you talk to—clerk, manager, etc.
- Listen carefully to the person's explanation and what is offered to you as a settlement. Remember you may have to compromise. However, don't be put off if the seller gets upset or says your complaint is unimportant.

Writing a complaint letter

- If you have to write a letter, keep it neat and to the point or use the consumer complaint form. Send copies of important documents, **do not send originals**. Give the business a deadline for their response, but be reasonable. Allow two to three weeks. Provide the names of offices, agencies, or associations you intend to go to for help if your problem isn't solved.
- Keep cool. Circle the dead-line date on your calendar. If you haven't heard from the business by then, send a copy of your complaint letter or completed complaint form and papers to the Bureau of Consumer Protection—the address is on the back of the complaint form. If you have questions about the form or what papers to include, please call: (800) 422-7128.
- Type your letter, if possible. If it is handwritten, make sure it is neat and legible.
- Include your name, address, home and work phone numbers and email address.
- Make it brief and to the point. Include all pertinent facts (date and place of transaction, name of product, serial number, store), state the problem, give a history of the problem and what you believe would be a fair and just settlement of the problem.

- Remember, the person reading your letter is not personally responsible for your problem, BUT may be responsible for resolving it. Therefore, avoid writing a sarcastic, threatening, or angry letter; it may lessen your chances of getting the complaint resolved.
- Keep a copy of the letter for your records.
- Keep all receipts, warranties, contracts, but send COPIES with your letter.
- Allow time for action.
- State how you can be reached.

Keep copies of your letter and all related documents and information.

Sample complaint letter

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

Date

Name of Contact Person (**if known**)

Company Name

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Company President (**or Company Contact Person**):

On **(date of transaction)**, I **(bought, leased, rented or had repaired)** a **(name of product with serial or model number or service performed)** at **(location, date and other important details of the transaction)**.

Unfortunately, your product **(or service)** has not performed satisfactorily **(or the service was inadequate)** because **(explain the problem, for example: the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented, etc.)**.

To solve the problem, I would appreciate your **(state the specific action you want – money back, charge card credit, repair, exchange, etc.)**. Enclosed are copies **(do NOT send originals)** of my records **(include receipts, guarantees, warranties, canceled checks, contracts, model and serial numbers, and any other documents)**.

I am looking forward to your reply and resolution of my problem, and will wait **(set a time, for example: three weeks)** before seeking third-party assistance. Please contact me at the above address or at **(email and/or home and work numbers with the area code)**.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name Printed

Enclosure(s)

What happens to your complaint?

The role of the Bureau of Consumer Protection is to assure that business practices are fair. Once we receive your complaint, it is entered into our computer database and given a file number. That number should be on all correspondence related to your complaint.

A consumer specialist or investigator will contact the business about your complaint. Although we cannot force a business to resolve a complaint, our contact with the company often results in a solution to a consumer's problem.

If we decide your complaint should be handled by another agency, we will forward your complaint to the appropriate agency and tell you where we sent it.

If we believe the business may have violated state consumer laws, we will contact the business and may also start an investigation. In some situations, we may send the business a formal warning notice. If it is a serious and widespread violation, we may recommend the case for prosecution to the Department of Justice or a district attorney. Further action is their decision. Our investigations may lead to prosecutions which can result in convictions, fines, imprisonment or restitution to victims. However, judgments and money awards can only be made by the court system.

Please remember that consumer laws only provide protection in some areas. We cannot give legal advice or serve as your private attorney. If the business you complained against refuses to settle your complaint, you might consider:

- discussing your complaint with a lawyer in private practice, or

- taking action in Small Claims Court if it has the power to hear your complaint.

For more information, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

(800) 422-7128

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Madison WI 53708-8911
(608) 224-4976

FAX: (608) 224-4939

TTY: (608) 224-5058

E-MAIL: DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov

**WEBSITE:
www.datcp.state.wi.us**