CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH | WRITING PART 2

LETTER OF COMPLAINT PRACTICE

From polite language to a convincing solution

A focused, printable practice workbook for **B2 First (FCE)** and **C1 Advanced (CAE)**. Learn to describe problems clearly, explain the consequences and request a reasonable solution.

B2 FIRST

140-190 words
Clear facts, appropriate register and a direct request.

C1 ADVANCED

220-260 words
Developed reasoning, nuanced tone and precise language.

Inside: task analysis, tone and register, structure, factual detail, useful complaint phrases, error correction, model-letter analysis, two complete writing tasks, reflection and an answer key.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Independent practice material. This is not an official Cambridge English examination paper.

QUICK EXAM GUIDE

Before you write

Two exam levels - one essential skill: explain the problem, show its effect and state the action you expect. Complaint letters should be factual, respectful and appropriately firm.

Know your Writing Part 2 task

B2 First

140-190 words
Writing paper: 80 minutes in total.
One task chosen in Part 2.
Aim for clear development and accurate language.

C1 Advanced

220-260 words
Writing paper: 90 minutes in total.
One task chosen in Part 2.
Aim for convincing reasoning and flexible language.

Your five-step complaint plan

1. Purpose - say why you are writing.

2. Facts - identify exactly what happened.

3. Impact - explain the consequences.

4. Solution - request a realistic remedy.

5. Close - invite a reply and sign off appropriately.

Traditional British sign-offs: Dear Sir or Madam → Yours faithfully. Dear Ms Patel / Dear Mr Smith → Yours sincerely. For formal emails, a short subject line may help, but do not invent postal addresses for the exam.

TASK ANALYSIS

Read the brief carefully

Read both original exam-style situations. Then complete the task analysis questions. Decide what the reader needs to know, not simply what has annoyed the writer.

Situation A - B2 First. Your sports club paid for a Saturday photography workshop advertised as three hours of outdoor practice in a small group. Instead, most of the session was a lecture, and several cameras were unavailable. Write to the organiser to explain the problems, say how the workshop affected you and request suitable action.

Situation B - C1 Advanced. A professional online writing course promised personal feedback after every assignment. Four weeks later, participants have received almost no comments on their work. Write to the course director, Ms Price, explaining the problems and their effects, proposing a fair solution and suggesting an improvement for future participants.

Analyse before you write

1. Who is the intended reader in Situation A?

2. Which two promises were not fulfilled in Situation A?

3. Name one reasonable solution for Situation A.

4. Would a casual or a professional register be more appropriate in Situation A?

5. Who is the reader in Situation B? How should the letter begin?

6. What evidence could support the complaint in Situation B?

7. Which impact on learning should the writer explain?

8. Name one remedy and one improvement for Situation B.

REGISTER AND POLITENESS

Choose the professional tone

Part A. Circle A or B: which sentence is more suitable in a formal complaint? Then rewrite the four messages in Part B so they are calm but firm.

1. A: Your service was a complete joke.
B: The service fell short of what was advertised.

2. A: I would appreciate it if you could investigate this matter.
B: Sort this out immediately!

3. A: I was profoundly, outrageously and most exceedingly dissatisfied.
B: I was disappointed with the arrangements.

4. A: Please explain how the issue will be resolved.
B: You must fix this tomorrow or else.

5. A: As if that were not enough, you ruined the whole day.
B: The delay caused further inconvenience for participants.

6. A: I believe a partial refund would be appropriate.
B: Your organisation is an absolute disgrace.

Part B. Rewrite these sentences

7. I want my money back RIGHT NOW!

8. Your staff clearly do not care about anyone.

9. The hotel was awful in every single way.

10. If you do not reply, I will tell the whole world!

ORGANISATION

Put the complaint in order

The five paragraphs below are from one formal complaint, but they have been mixed up. Put them in the best order, then identify what each paragraph does.

A. I would appreciate a response within the next two weeks and hope the matter can be resolved without further difficulty.

B. Consequently, our group had to hire a separate room at short notice, which cost an additional £60 and delayed the start of our workshop.

C. I am writing to complain about the conference facilities we booked at the Riverside Centre on 10 October.

D. Given these circumstances, I would be grateful if you could refund the additional rental cost and explain why the arrangements were changed.

E. Although the booking included a projector and a quiet meeting room, neither was available when we arrived. We were also informed that the replacement room would not be ready for an hour.

Best order: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Match each function to a paragraph

1. **Explain the facts** **Paragraph:** _____
2. **State the purpose** **Paragraph:** _____
3. **Describe consequences** **Paragraph:** _____
4. **Request a remedy** **Paragraph:** _____
5. **Close politely** **Paragraph:** _____

One more question: Which paragraph would be least convincing if it included no dates, equipment details or evidence?

FACTS AND CONSEQUENCES

From vague to convincing

Replace vague complaints with one precise, polite sentence. Use the notes to show what happened and why it mattered. Example: The event started 90 minutes late, causing us to miss our connecting train.

1. Weak: The delivery was terrible.
Notes: promised Tuesday; delivered Friday; missed printing deadline

2. Weak: The room was bad.
Notes: heating did not work; 12°C; workshop participants left early

3. Weak: The course was useless.
Notes: two feedback sessions cancelled; no replacement offered

4. Weak: The transport was a disaster.
Notes: coach arrived one hour late; lost museum reservation

5. Weak: The replacement was no better.
Notes: new device arrived with cracked screen; still unusable

6. Weak: The venue was disappointing.
Notes: wheelchair entrance locked; visitors had to use steep stairs

USEFUL PHRASES

Language for polite firmness

Match sentence beginnings 1-12 to endings A-L. Use each ending once. Think about grammar and meaning, not only vocabulary.

Beginnings (1-12)		Endings (A-L)
1. I am writing to express...	____	**A.** to receiving your response.
2. Unfortunately, the item...	____	**B.** my dissatisfaction with the service received.
3. Contrary to the information provided,	____	**C.** in additional expenses for our group.
4. As a result, we were...	____	**D.** if you could arrange a replacement.
5. I would be grateful...	____	**E.** we discovered that it was unavailable.
6. In view of these circumstances,	____	**F.** the advertised specifications were not met.
7. Despite being assured that the room was ready,	____	**G.** I believe a partial refund is appropriate.
8. The delay resulted...	____	**H.** reach a satisfactory resolution.
9. I hope we can...	____	**I.** was damaged when it arrived.
10. I would appreciate...	____	**J.** forced to make alternative arrangements.
11. I was particularly disappointed...	____	**K.** it if you could investigate the issue.
12. I look forward...	____	**L.** to discover that no support staff were available.

Tip: In a real letter, choose a few useful phrases rather than filling every sentence with memorised expressions.

ACCURACY

Find and correct the mistake

Each sentence contains one grammar, vocabulary or collocation error. Rewrite it correctly. Pay attention to prepositions, formal structures and fixed expressions.

1. I am writing for complain about the delayed order.

2. Despite of the confirmation, the session was cancelled.

3. The equipment was not suitable to beginners.

4. I would appreciate if you could refund the course fee.

5. We were promised with individual feedback.

6. The delay resulted to additional expenses.

7. I look forward to hear from you.

8. I was disappointed of the service provided.

9. Although the room was quiet, but the heating did not work.

10. The replacement arrived lately.

11. Not only the Wi-Fi failed, but the projector was unavailable.

12. I suggest you to offer a partial refund.

MODEL ANALYSIS

B2 model: read like an examiner

Read this B2 First model letter. Underline the reason for writing, circle the factual details, and box the requested action. Then answer the questions.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to complain about a photocopier I ordered from your company on 21 April for our local community club. According to the confirmation email, it should have arrived on 24 April, but it was not delivered until 7 May.

The delay caused serious problems because we needed the machine to prepare materials for a weekend workshop. We had to use a local printing shop instead, which cost us an extra £45. Unfortunately, when the photocopier finally arrived, its paper feeder did not work properly.

I contacted your customer service team twice, but I have not received a clear answer about what will happen next. I am disappointed because I expected better service from your company.

I would appreciate it if you could arrange a replacement as soon as possible and refund the additional printing costs. I have attached the receipt and order confirmation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Natalia Griffith

Answer in your own words

1. What date was the product promised, and when did it arrive?

2. What two difficulties did the club experience?

3. Which two actions does Natalia ask the company to take?

4. Find one expression that communicates dissatisfaction politely.

5. Why is Yours faithfully the appropriate ending?

MODEL ANALYSIS

C1 model: build a case

At C1 level, readers need specific evidence, developed consequences and a proportionate solution. Read this model, then answer the questions.

Dear Ms Carter,

I am writing on behalf of several participants to express our disappointment with the Professional Writing Course currently being delivered by your training centre. Although the course was advertised as an interactive programme with weekly tutor feedback, our experience over the first four weeks has fallen considerably short of those expectations.

The course description promised live discussions and individual comments on each assignment. In practice, three scheduled discussions have been replaced by recordings, sometimes with less than a day's notice. Furthermore, two assignments submitted at the beginning of the course have yet to receive feedback. These changes are particularly frustrating for participants preparing professional applications, who enrolled specifically to improve their writing through expert guidance. Several classmates have already taken time off work to attend these sessions, making last-minute changes especially inconvenient.

I appreciate that unexpected staffing difficulties can arise. Nevertheless, given the £180 course fee and the emphasis placed on personal support in the advertisement, I believe a more satisfactory arrangement is warranted.

I would therefore ask you to confirm when the outstanding feedback will be provided and whether live sessions can resume for the remainder of the programme. If this is not possible, a partial refund reflecting the services not delivered would be a reasonable alternative. Clearer communication about timetable changes would also prevent similar difficulties for future participants.

I hope we can resolve this constructively and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Morgan

Analyse the writer's choices

1. Which two advertised promises were not fulfilled?

2. Find a sentence that acknowledges the centre’s perspective.

3. What impact on participants makes the situation particularly serious?

4. What solution is requested first, and what alternative is offered?

5. Find one phrase that sounds firm without sounding angry.

EXAM-STYLE WRITING TASK

Plan a B2 complaint

Your task: You attended a weekend photography course. The advertisement promised practical outdoor activities, but most sessions consisted of lectures, and some equipment was unavailable. Write an **email to the course organiser** explaining what disappointed you, how it affected your experience and what you would like the organiser to do.

Write 140-190 words.

Plan before you draft

Who will read the email? _____

Your purpose in one sentence: _____

What was promised? _____

What actually happened? _____

How did this affect your experience? _____

Which solution would be realistic? _____

Opening phrase: _____

Closing phrase: _____

Suggested paragraph plan

Paragraph 1: State your reason for writing and identify the course.
Paragraph 2: Give clear details of what went wrong.
Paragraph 3: Explain the consequences.
Paragraph 4: Request a realistic solution and close politely.

Exam reminder: You do not need to create a postal address. A useful subject line is optional for this email; answering every part of the task is not.

140-190 WORDS

Write your B2 email

Use your plan from page 11. Keep your tone professional, develop every task point and leave time to check your answer.

Subject: _____

Word count: _____ **Time taken:** _____ **One sentence to improve:** _____

EXAM-STYLE WRITING TASK

Plan a C1 complaint

Your task: You booked accommodation for a group attending an international conference. The hotel assured you that suitable meeting facilities and reliable internet access would be available, but several promised services were missing.

Write a **formal letter to the hotel manager** explaining the problems, describing their consequences for your group and proposing a fair resolution. Suggest one improvement that could prevent similar problems for future guests.

Write 220-260 words.

Turn facts into a convincing case

Reader and register: _____

Your reason for writing: _____

Promised facility / service 1: _____

Promised facility / service 2: _____

Evidence: dates, bookings or staff responses: _____

Consequences for your group: _____

A balanced acknowledgement (optional): _____

Preferred remedy: _____

Fair alternative remedy: _____

Future improvement: _____

Planning check: Do your proposed remedies match the scale of the inconvenience? Are the consequences explained, rather than simply listed?

220-260 WORDS | PAGE 1 OF 2

Write your C1 letter

Start with an appropriate greeting. State your reason for writing, then present the evidence and explain its significance.

220-260 WORDS | PAGE 2 OF 2

Finish and refine your C1 letter

Continue your answer. Include a reasonable solution, a constructive closing paragraph and an appropriate sign-off.

Revision pause: Underline the sentence explaining the main consequence. Circle your requested solution. Check whether your tone stays formal and respectful.

Final word count: _____ Time taken: _____

EDITING AND IMPROVEMENT

Rewrite an unconvincing complaint

The following paragraph is deliberately weak. It is vague, emotional and fails to explain why the problem matters. Rewrite it in **90-110 words**, as part of a formal complaint to a training centre.

Weak paragraph:
Your course was rubbish. Everything was really bad and we were very angry. The tutor was never there and we did not learn anything. It was a total waste of time and your team did not even care. I want you to sort it out now. You should be ashamed.

Facts you may use: Two classes were cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice; no replacement sessions were offered; paid course fee £120; several participants took time off work; request replacement classes or a partial refund.

Your improved paragraph

Before moving on, check that you included **specific evidence**, **consequences** and a **reasonable request**. A complaint should persuade the reader to act, not simply express anger.

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

Check your finished writing

Use these criteria to assess either writing task. This is a learner-friendly checklist, not an official Cambridge score report.

Four areas to check

Content

I answered every task point and made a clear request. 0 1 2 3 4 5

Communicative Achievement

My register suits the reader; my complaint is polite and firm. 0 1 2 3 4 5

Organisation

My paragraphs move logically from problem to consequence to solution. 0 1 2 3 4 5

Language

My grammar and vocabulary are varied, precise and accurate. 0 1 2 3 4 5

> **How to use these numbers:** Circle a score from 0 (not yet demonstrated) to 5 (very effective) for each area. Use the scores to choose one improvement priority.

My next improvement

One sentence I could make more precise:

One change I will make in my next letter:

ACTIVITIES 1-4

Answer key

Activity 1 - Read the brief carefully

1. The photography workshop organiser. **2.** Three hours of outdoor practice and small-group tuition / access to equipment. **3.** A partial refund, replacement practical session or appropriate alternative. **4.** Professional / polite formal or semi-formal register. **5.** Ms Price, the course director; Dear Ms Price. **6.** Assignment submission dates, missing feedback records or the course advertisement. **7.** Participants cannot improve their writing in time for professional applications. **8.** Provide feedback or a fair partial refund; establish clear feedback deadlines / communicate delays.

Activity 2 - Choose the professional tone

Part A: 1 B; 2 A; 3 B; 4 A; 5 B; 6 A.

Part B - Possible answers:
7. I would appreciate a full refund, given the difficulties described.
8. I was disappointed by the lack of assistance from your staff.
9. The heating was unreliable and the room had not been cleaned on arrival.
10. I would appreciate a prompt response outlining how you intend to resolve this issue.

Activity 3 - Put the complaint in order

Best order: C - E - B - D - A.
Functions: 1 E (facts); 2 C (purpose); 3 B (consequences); 4 D (remedy); 5 A (closing).
One more question: Paragraph E; without specifics about what was booked and what was missing, the complaint would be much less persuasive.

Activity 4 - From vague to convincing

1. The delivery, promised for Tuesday, arrived on Friday, leaving us unable to print the materials before our deadline.

2. The room heating was not working and the temperature was only 12°C, causing several workshop participants to leave early.

3. Two scheduled feedback sessions were cancelled without replacements, preventing us from reviewing our progress.

4. The coach arrived an hour late, meaning our group missed its reserved museum entry time.

5. The replacement device had a cracked screen on arrival and was therefore still unusable.

6. The accessible entrance was locked, leaving wheelchair users unable to enter without assistance.

Other answers are acceptable if they are factual, clear and appropriately polite.

ACTIVITIES 5-8 AND 11

Answer key

Activity 5 - Useful phrases

1 B · 2 I · 3 F · 4 J · 5 D · 6 G · 7 E · 8 C · 9 H · 10 K · 11 L · 12 A

Activity 6 - Find and correct the mistake

1. I am writing **to complain** about the delayed order.

2. Despite the confirmation, the session was cancelled.

3. The equipment was not **suitable for** beginners.

4. I would appreciate **it** if you could refund the course fee.

5. We were promised individual feedback.

6. The delay **resulted in** additional expenses.

7. I look forward to **hearing** from you.

8. I was **disappointed with** the service provided.

9. Although the room was quiet, the heating did not work.

10. The replacement arrived **late**.

11. Not only did the Wi-Fi fail, but the projector was unavailable.

12. I suggest **offering** a partial refund. / I suggest **that you offer** a partial refund.

Activity 7 - B2 model analysis

1. Promised 24 April; arrived 7 May. **2.** Emergency printing cost £45; the paper feeder was defective. **3.** Replace the machine and refund extra printing costs. **4.** Example: I would appreciate it if you could... **5.** The writer begins Dear Sir or Madam, so Yours faithfully follows British formal-letter convention.

Activity 8 - C1 model analysis

1. Live discussions and individual assignment feedback. **2.** I appreciate that unexpected staffing difficulties can arise. **3.** Students preparing professional applications lose valuable guidance; sudden cancellations also cost working participants time. **4.** First, restore live sessions and supply feedback; alternatively, give a partial refund. **5.** Example: I believe a more satisfactory arrangement is warranted.

Activity 11 - Improving the paragraph

Answers vary. A strong response specifies the cancelled classes, explains the effect on participants and asks for replacement sessions or a proportionate refund. Avoid insults, exaggerated claims and threats.

Exam information: Cambridge English, B2 First and C1 Advanced exam format pages. **Independent resource:** not an official Cambridge English exam paper.