

Emailing- Dealing with problems and complaints

What is wrong with all the phrases below?

Emails with problems and complaints

Opening line giving the (general) topic of the email

About...

Body of the email

Explaining the problem or complaint

The timetable was completely wrong.

I'm absolutely furious about the end of term test.

What I was told about the course was total rubbish.

Asking for action

So, sort it out ASAP.

For that reason, I deserve a refund.

Therefore, you have to send me another one.

Closing an email with problems or complaints

I expect to hear from you ASAP.

Emails dealing with problems and complaints

Opening line

About your complaint,...

Apologising

Whoops!/ Sorry!!

Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)

You poor thing!/ Poor you!

What a bummer!

Giving reasons for the problem

It was an accident.

Someone forgot.

We've been really busy.

Negative replies/ Giving bad news

It's impossible.

We always say no in these situations.

The professor says that isn't true.

That doesn't match our policy.

There's nothing I can do.

Asking for more information about the problem or complaint

Please tell me more.

Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)

What about talking to the teacher directly?

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?

As I said, we really are very very very sorry.

Answer: 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 of that phrase until one of you gives up or says something that is less formal than the last thing that was said. Then choose another phrase and do the same thing.

Brainstorming stage

Brainstorm suitable phrases to do the things above, this time with the right level of formality for your own emailing.

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Look at the rude versions above to help with this activity.