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.*

**Emails with problems and complaints**

**Opening line giving the (general) topic of the email***

**Body of the email**

**Explaining the problem or complaint***

**Asking for action***

**Closing an email with problems or complaints***

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2015
Emails dealing with problems and complaints
Opening line

Apologising

Being sympathetic (but not actually apologising)

Giving reasons for the problem

Negative replies/ Giving bad news

Asking for more information about the problem or complaint

Suggesting solutions (for them to try themselves)

Offering future action

Closing line for an email dealing with problems or complaints

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

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