Adjustment Letter

Adjustment letters are letters that are created to satisfy someone who has lodged a complaint against your company, and they are generated for various types of audiences: an unsatisfied client, unhappy employee, or a discontented supplier. Most adjustment letters are written in response to a claim filed against the company; however, some are generated as a result of an internal discovery netting information about a faulty product or negligent service.

Objectives of an adjustment letter:

- To apologize
- To offer some type of conciliation—partial or full reimbursement, depending upon the policy of your company
- To restore good will—this is the primary goal

Because of the delicate nature of adjustment letters, the tone and style should maintain professionalism, project intimacy, and accept responsibility without blaming the client.

*Note: Before you write the adjustment letter, you must get all the details and review the policy regarding faulty products. Also, avoid using “faulty”, “defective”, or any other potentially libelous adjective in your letter.*

The letter should follow the official business letter formatting. On the subject line, you should state the problem briefly and clearly.

Purpose of an apology letter:

- To acknowledge and describe the error
- To accept responsibility and describe the plan for compensation
- To give instructions for returning merchandise, correcting an error, receiving compensation
- To rebuild the damaged relationship

Components of the Adjustment Letter (three paragraphs)

*First paragraph:*

- After the salutation, introduce yourself and immediately follow with an apology or a regret statement. Your apology should include the reason for the letter. Always address your reader respectfully.
- Describe the error, trying not to emphasize it. When you describe the error, you will use the pronoun “we”. Remember, the company is who the client sees and individuals are not as important as the company.
- After you acknowledge the problem, do not repeat it. Avoid using “faulty” “error” “negligence” etc. You should move forward and not backward.

*Second paragraph:*

- Specifically describe what must be done by the client and by the company.
- Graciously offer a concession and an explanation, or if there isn’t a policy for the concession, explain why.
Concisely describe a time frame for when your company’s obligation for repair will end. This is especially true if your company could incur penalties or interests.

Third paragraph:

- Point out any steps that your company will take to prevent a reoccurrence.
- Rebuild the relationship by reminding the client of prior relationships and commitments.
- End the letter with goodwill.

Additional Information:
Tone and style are two of the most important elements that you will consider when writing this kind of letter. In order to improve client relations, consider the following information.

- You will write in first person, using “I” or “we”.
  a) Using first person singular provides a more intimate connection between the writer and the audience.
  b) Using first person plural represents the entire company.
- Avoid passive voice. When you write something like a mistake was made, there is no one taking responsibility—no human. Instead, write, we entered 1000 instead of 10,000, which resulted in....
- Avoid assigning blame.
- You will project the “you viewpoint”. Instead of writing: We must receive the sales receipt before we can offer you a refund, you should write: So that you can receive your refund as quickly as possible, please mail or fax your receipt: give the address or fax number.
- Avoid over using the pronoun you to avoid an accusatory tone.

Writing clearly and concisely involves cutting out as many unnecessary words and phrases as possible.

- Be specific—avoid using too many adjectives or adverbs.
- Avoid stringing too many clauses or phrases together—if you have a sentence with many clauses or phrases, consider bulleting.
- Avoid clichés, euphemism, slang, colloquialisms, or heavy jargon.
- Avoid stating the obvious—if you are writing to tell someone about an error, you don’t have to say that we were examining your files and found an error...that is obvious.
- Avoid filler language.
- Avoid unnecessary prepositional phrases.
- Avoid redundancy, especially using liable words such as “error” or “mistake”.
