

Consumer Protection Division

Consumer Complaint Tips

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Making a Complaint

Consumers are often slow or reluctant to complain about an unsatisfactory product or service. Nobody likes to admit that they've been "had."

Valid complaints alert businesses to problems with their product quality, service or distribution. Businesses want repeat business and know that it costs substantially more to get a new customer than it does to keep one. The best advertising in the world for any business is a satisfied customer. The opposite is also true.

When to Complain...

It is important to complain about an unsatisfactory product or service as soon as possible after the problem arises. There are legal time limits in which to take action or you will lose any chance of recovery.

How to Complain...In Person

The steps in making an effective complaint are basically the same whether you complain in person, by telephone or by letter.

Go to the right place first to complain - the seller. Every good business recognizes reasonable complaints as an opportunity rather than an irritant: "He profits most who serves best".

Complain to someone who has the authority to help you. Find out if the person you are dealing with is in fact able to help solve your problem.

Identify yourself and your problem. Be factual and precise. Proof of payment or other proof of dealings with the business or seller is important. Especially if you are complaining by letter, make copies of receipts, cancelled cheques, guarantees and any previous correspondence. Enclose a copy of each.

Ask for what you want. Explain why you are dissatisfied and exactly what action you would like taken.

Be reasonable and fair. You may not have determined the store's refund policy before buying or have properly complied with the terms and warranties. You have no legal right to return goods for a refund, unless they are defective.

Be polite, but firm. Keep your temper and sense of humor. It works wonders. Be persistent. If the seller or retailer does not satisfy you, complain to the manufacturer of the product or, where unsatisfactory services are involved, to any appropriate business or professional association. You may also consider taking action through the courts.

How to Complain...In Writing

The following points will help you write an effective letter of complaint.

- Type your letter. Keep it short. Letter should be marked "Without Prejudice" Send the letter by a method that will prove the letter was received. Keep copy of the letter and proof that the letter was delivered

- Ensure you complain to the person who has the authority to do something about your complaint.
- Identify the date and location of the purchase
- Explain the problem, in your own words.
- Outline the action you have taken to date.
- Specify the solution you expect and provide a reasonable time period to have the problem(s) rectified (2 weeks is usually sufficient time).
- Provide a daytime phone number.
- Enclose copies of the relevant documents, keep the originals.

Where to Complain...

The successful complaint is made in the following order:

1. to the seller,
2. to the manufacturer,
3. to a professional or business association.

The Consumer Protection Division administers laws specifically governing all motor dealers, auctioneers, fund-raising businesses, collection agents, credit reporting agencies and direct sellers.

Anonymous Complaint – You may also file an anonymous complaint, however there must be some evidence of wrongdoing supplied to support your concern. Since the complaint is filed anonymously, you will not be personally informed of the Division's actions or findings. An anonymous letter can be mailed or faxed to our attention.

All corporations, co-operatives and business names must be registered with the Corporations Branch of the Information Services Corporation. The corporate registry is the official record in the province of the company or business that is required for any legal action. Corporations Branch may be contacted at (306) 787-2962.

Complaints about misleading advertising, deceptive marketing practices, patents and copyrights can be directed to Industry Canada at 1-800-348-5358 (Ottawa). Complaints about labeling, weights and measurers and bankruptcy information are also handled by Industry Canada at offices in Regina (306) 780-5383 and Saskatoon (306) 975-4296.

You may also complain to the better Business Bureau of Saskatchewan Inc. at (306) 352-7601 in Regina.

For more information contact:

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<http://www.fcaa.gov.sk.ca/cpd>

A current version of this Consumer Tip and other Consumer Tips are available at the Consumer Protection Division Web site at <http://www.fcaa.gov.sk.ca/cpd>. Most public libraries have Internet access available if you do not have Internet at home.

If you need more copies of this tip sheet, you have permission to photocopy. Please check the Web site or contact our office to make sure you have the most up-to-date copy.

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