

## How to Handle Your Own Complaint

As a consumer you have the right to expect quality products and services at fair prices. If something goes wrong, however, there are things you can do to solve the problem. Here are some suggestions for handling your own complaint:

### Identify the problem:

Before you complain to a company, be sure to identify the problem, what (if anything) you have already done to resolve it, and decide what you think is a fair settlement. Do you want your money back? Would you like the product repaired? Exchanged?

### Gather records:

Start a file about your complaint, include copies of sales receipts, repair orders, warranties, cancelled checks, and contracts which will back up your complaint and help the company resolve your problem.

### Go back to where you made the purchase:

Contact the person who sold you the item or performed the service. Calmly and accurately explain the problem and what action you would like taken. If that person is not helpful, ask for the supervisor or manager, and restate your case. A large percentage of consumer problems are resolved at this level. Chances are, yours will be too.

Allow each person you contact time to resolve your problem before contacting another source for assistance.

Keep a record of your efforts and include notes about whom you spoke with and what was done about the problem. Save copies of any letters or emails you send to the company, as well as letters sent to you.

### Don't give up:

If you are not satisfied with the response, don't give up. If the company operates nationally or the product is a national brand, call or write a letter to the person responsible for consumer complaints at the company's headquarters. Many companies have a toll-free number, often printed on the product. If you are writing a letter, send your letter to the consumer office or to the president of the company.

### What to write:

- The letter should include your name, address, home, work, cell telephone numbers, email and fax, if needed.
- Make your letter BRIEF and to the point. Specify all the important facts about your purchase, including the date and place you made the purchase, and any information you can give about the product: serial or model number, etc. If you are complaining about a service you received, describe the service and who performed it.
- State exactly what you want done about the problem and how long you are willing to wait to resolve it. Be reasonable.
- Include copies of all documents regarding your problem. Be sure to send COPIES, not originals.
- Don't write an angry, sarcastic, or threatening letter. The person reading your letter probably was not responsible for your problem, but may be helpful in resolving it.
- TYPE the letter, if possible, to insure neatness.
- Keep a copy of all correspondence to and from the company.
- See the sample letter on the next page as a guide to help you.