

Student Handout: Unit 2 Lesson 2



When You're (un)Happy And You Know It...

Suggested time: 75 -110 Minutes

What's important in this lesson:

Sometimes it's difficult to know what we can do when something in our world upsets us. We don't like to feel powerless. What can we do, then, in order to make our voices heard? In this lesson, you will examine a method of effectively voicing a complaint, as one way of actively participating in the world.

Complete these steps:

1. With your teacher, review the *Sentence Starters* activity from Lesson 1. Participate fully in order to demonstrate that you understand different points-of-view, and different reactions to a particular advertisement.
2. Discuss the ways in which someone might respond when angry, frustrated, or offended. Listen carefully and participate fully in conversation with the teacher to examine three aspects of effective communication: **awareness of audience**, **sense of purpose**, and **appropriate level of language**. Ask questions about anything you aren't totally clear about.
3. Go over the handout chart called "Diction, or Choosing the Appropriate Level of Language" (or another "Levels of Language" resource sheet).
4. Use these guidelines from #3 above to complete the brief exercise "Identifying Appropriate Levels of Language". Read the instructions carefully, and hand it in when completed.
5. Listen carefully to the feedback from your teacher when the assignment has been assessed. Ask questions about anything you might still be unsure about with this activity.
6. Look over the material provided to you about letters of complaint ("Writing an Effective Letter of Complaint" and "Writing Effective E-mail", as well as the example of an e-mail letter of complaint). Ask questions if you have any.
7. Use the ad provided to you by the teacher (or, if possible, find one online or in an available magazine), which fits the idea of a controversial or possible offensive advertisement. Remember that different people and groups can find different words, images, and ideas offensive. Consider who might be offended by an ad, even if you yourself are not bothered by it at all.

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8. Imagine yourself in the position of someone offended by the ad. What reasons do you have for being upset by the ad? How can you express this point-of-view appropriately and effectively? You may choose to write as yourself, if you are bothered or concerned by the way an ad is selling its product, its image, or its message.
9. Following the guidelines and checking with the example letter, create a rough draft, either on paper or on the computer, of an e-mail letter of complaint about the offensive ad, from the point-of-view that you've chosen. Conference with your teacher about this rough draft, and make any necessary changes for improvement.
10. Using the supplied template, write a polished version of the e-mail letter of complaint. Hand it in to your teacher.

Hand-in the following to your teacher:

1. Completed "Identifying Appropriate Levels of Language" activity sheet
2. Final version of the E-mail Letter of Complaint

Questions for the teacher:

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Levels of Language Guideline

	Colloquial/Local	Informal	Formal	Technical
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ slang ▪ nicknames ▪ possibly profanity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ friendly ▪ casual, possibly humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ polite ▪ professional, businesslike ▪ to-the-point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ jargon ▪ terminology ▪ abbreviations
When is it spoken?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ with peers ▪ no stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ friends ▪ family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interviews ▪ work environment w/ authority figure, or someone respected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ with an expert in a job (eg. architect, doctor, electrician, plumber)
Where is it written?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ notes ▪ brief messages ▪ text – messages or online chat rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ most e-mail ▪ friendly letters ▪ cards ▪ casual written opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ business letters, writing for the newspaper, some school assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ professional magazines or journals ▪ diagrams, blueprints ▪ prescriptions ▪ research reports
How does it look?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unplanned ▪ likely contains errors ▪ off the top of the head, hard to follow ▪ some gaps, many pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ casual sentences ▪ one draft is OK most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ carefully written ▪ editing for best word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ combination of words and symbols ▪ combination of words and abbreviations ▪ often used with diagrams and graphs

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Identifying Appropriate Levels of Language

For each of the following pairs of statements, indicate which one is the most appropriate for the audience and purpose described. Indicate your choice by underlining in pencil. Hand the completed sheet in when completed, and then conference with the teacher to get feedback as soon as it has been assessed.

1. A teacher writes home to a parent about a student:

- a) *Just thought I'd tell ya that your kid's been skippin' class a lot.*
- b) *I'm concerned about your daughter's attendance lately.*

2. A high school student interviews for a dream summer job:

- a) *Yes, Mr. Anderson; if you give me the chance to work on *The Fast and the Furious 3*, I will be a reliable and hard-working driver.*
- b) *Sure, dude – I could handle that.*

3. A family is having Christmas dinner:

- a) *C'mon, grandma. That's so lame. 50 Cent is one mean *%^(%\$?><}!!!*
- b) *Sure, grandma. I know you don't listen to my kind of music. That's OK. But I really like a singer called 50 Cent. It's not really Christmas music, though.*

4. You've been stopped by the police for speeding late at night.

- a) *Sorry, officer. I didn't think I was going that fast. I'm just trying to get home so my parents don't get any more worried.*
- b) *Nope. This sucks.*

5. You need to ask a question of your Credit Recovery teacher.

- a) *Hey! Dude! Over here!*
- b) *Excuse me, Mr or Ms _____? Can you help me out when have a second? Oh, and did I mention how nice your new haircut looks?*

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Aspects of Effective Communication (What Are They? Does It Matter?)

In a lot of different situations, our communication with others has a real purpose. We might be looking for a job. We might need to explain what's wrong with our car so that the mechanic can identify the problem. We might simply be telling a joke, in the hopes that we can get a laugh from the people around us. In these situations, and many, many others, there are three (3) basic aspects of communication that we should pay attention to if we want to increase the chances of being successful, landing that job, fixing the car, getting that laugh.

1. Sense of Purpose (Know what you're trying to accomplish.)

How will you use language differently if you are interviewing for a job you really want, compared to interviewing for a job that you don't care about that much?

How do you use language in a particular way, if you need a favour from your brother or sister, compared to if you are trying to get on his or her nerves?

2. Awareness of Audience (Know who's listening.)

Do you change the way you describe your summer holidays if you're talking to your grandmother, or if you're talking to your friends at school?

Let's say that you're the witness to a fight on the school bus: do you tell the story the same way to your friends at lunch, and to the principal?

3. Appropriate Level of Language (Know your choices.)

If you are talking about an area of real interest to you, hockey, music, cars, or fashion, does it change the terminology you can use if you are talking to an expert in the area, compared to talking to someone with very little knowledge?

Can you tell a joke in exactly the same way in a locker room as in a church?

Few of us would deny that we might need to dress differently at work than we do when we're relaxing on our own time. We might know that we listen to music at a different volume when we're alone than when there are other people around. We might give up our seat on the bus for an elderly person or a pregnant woman, but not automatically to a healthy adult. We make adjustments all the time to our behaviour, and we can apply similar sensitivity to our use of language.

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Writing Effective E-mail

Writing e-mail can be tricky, do not forget that e-mail can be stored for a long time or forwarded to many people. And once you've sent it, it's gone, and it's too late to change your mind!

Subject headings for e-mail are essential. Use *descriptive, helpful* subject headings; something like "Info" is too unclear, especially if the people you're writing to get a lot of e-mail. Help them to know what to expect from your e-mail. Here are some examples:

- **RE:** *Regarding* (example, Re: Team Photo)
- **URGENT:** *Urgent request* (example, Urgent: need CD for new version of DOOM.)
- **FYI:** *For Your Information* (example, FYI: Toilet paper is now located in the hall closet.)
- **REQ:** *Request* (example, REQ: If anyone is driving to Grand Bend, I would like a ride.)

E-mail is an informal method of communicating, but these 5 basic rules of style or *Netiquette* (network etiquette, or rules of politeness) are expected.

a

DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPS. This is understood as shouting.

b

Think carefully what you are writing; it's a permanent record and can be easily forwarded to others.

c

Write descriptive subject lines. Many busy people will only open messages with interesting or clear subject lines.

d

Don't overuse short forms like BTW (by the way) or IMHO (in my humble opinion). Not everyone is experienced with these shortcuts, and they may not want to admit their confusion – your point is more important than speed.

e

Read over your e-mail BEFORE you send it. Although e-mail is a slightly more informal method of communication than writing a letter, be sure you make your points clearly and briefly. Use a spell checker or dictionary, if available.

If you want to learn more about how to send email messages, there is an excellent site [at webfoot.com](http://www.webfoot.com).

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Writing an Effective Letter of Complaint

Planning a letter of complaint well is the best way to make sure that your concerns will be taken more seriously. You want to format the letter properly, whether it is written for e-mail or for traditional (or 'snail') mail. The most important thing is to write your letter in a way that is clear, organized, and mature. Use the following guide for ordering your ideas:

Paragraph 1 (only 1 or 2 sentences): **state the purpose of the letter**

- ... to express my concern about...
- ... to formally complain...
- ... to request that you remove...
- ... to cancel my subscription...
- ... to demand (or request) an explanation of...

Paragraph 2 (brief, depending on the topic): **details of the complaint** (which may need a description of the offending advertisement or product)

- When I saw your ad, I was surprised to see...
- Your product is advertised as...
- I am disappointed to see that...
- You specifically claim in your advertising that...
- You must be aware that...

Paragraph 3 (brief, 1 – 3 sentences only): **self-identification** (answer the following questions: Who am I? Why should the company care/listen?)

- ... a loyal customer for ___ years...
- ... a concerned and loving parent...
- ... brother / sister of an 8-yr.-old...
- ... member of an organization supporting...

paragraph 4 (final one, brief): **call to action**

- ...please cancel my subscription immediately...
- ...remove the offending advertisement...
- ...give me a refund...
- ...replace or repair the product...
- ...pay for damages caused by...
- ...offer an official apology to...

Finally:

Remember that your letter will be taken more seriously if it is written more seriously;

Clear and polite usually works better than clear and impolite;

Busy people working don't have the time to figure out poor grammar or bad spelling – if you fix it first, they will read it.

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From:

Subject:

To:

CC:

BCC:

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From: francaw@tepa.ca

Subject: REQ: your attention to offensive advertisement

To: complaints@sportcanada.com

CC:

BCC:

Dear Complaints Department:

I am writing to express my concern over an ad in the latest issue of *Sport Canada* magazine.

My ten-year-old son is a huge sports fan, but I was shocked to see that instead of looking at an article on his favourite basketball player, he was staring at an advertisement featuring a half-naked woman stretched out on a pool table. When I asked my son what product the ad was selling, he had no idea. It turned out to be a brand of pool cue.

I have happily subscribed to *Sport Canada* for years, in order to encourage my son's reading habits. Our whole family enjoys talking about sports, and your magazine is often a part of our conversations.

Unfortunately, unless you take steps to remove this advertisement from future issues, I will cancel the subscription immediately. You must know that people of all ages read *Sport Canada*, and I believe that you should be more responsible.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,
Franca Williams.