

CAE Writing

Letter of Complaint

Here is a question from a past CAE exam.

You and a friend, Sam, bought some CDs to help you improve your English. You were not happy with the CDs and have decided to write to the publisher, CD World.

Read the email from Sam and the advertisement for the CDs below, on which you have made some notes. Then, using the information appropriately, write a letter to CD World explaining why you bought the CDs, why you are dissatisfied and saying what you would like the company to do.

From: Sam

Subject: CDs

How did you get on with the language practice CDs? I wasn't very impressed. "English conversation in a week" – I don't think so! The ad was dishonest – I think we should try to get our money back.



Now write your letter to CD World, as outlined above.

First you need to make a plan. The letter should be divided into 3 paragraphs, as follows:

- State problem, say why you bought the CDs and that you are dissatisfied
- Detailed explanation of problems (no business conversations, not enough time to repeat, the price)
- Conclusion, what you want CD World to do

Previously, the CAE exam included a part of Paper 3 which tested register transfer (changing informal to formal register or vice versa). This has been dropped from the updated exam, but the examiner wants to see that you are able to frame your answer in an appropriate way. Your letter should be firm, but courteous in style. You should think of ways of expressing your displeasure that are not offensive.

Here is an example answer.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my disappointment with the course of English language CDs which I purchased from your company a few days ago. I have a good theoretical knowledge of English grammar and I was hoping that your course would help me to improve my conversational fluency and my knowledge of business English, but I feel your product is unsatisfactory and your advertisement is misleading in several respects.

To begin with, your advertisement states that the course provides English conversation for pleasure and business. This naturally leads one to expect that there are commercial English conversations on the CDs, and yet no such conversations are included. In addition, the student is expected to listen and repeat the conversations, but there is not enough time to do this without constantly pressing the "pause" button. Finally, your advertisement gives the impression that the price for the whole course is 20 euros, whereas in fact the CDs cost 20 euros each. The total price is thus 120 euros. I feel this is, to say the least, somewhat misleading.

For these reasons I am most dissatisfied with your product. I am returning the CDs and expect a full refund. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully
(your name)