

THAKUR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & COMMERCE

Autonomous

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

BUSINESS /TRADE LETTERS

Introduction:

Business Correspondence normally falls into three categories:

- Business to Business letters
- Business to Customers
- Customers to business letters. In this chapter students will learn about trade letters that are normally between the two parties: traders and customers.

Trade letters include [in the order of their occurrence]

1. Inquiry
2. Order
3. Complaints, Claims & Adjustments
4. Consumer Redress Letters
5. Credit
6. Collection
7. Sales:

Inquiry: A letter that seeks information about a product or a service is known as a letter of inquiry. Unless a buyer collects information about the product, he cannot place an order. His first step, therefore, is to collect the information about the product.

Drafting a letter of inquiry: Like any business letter, an inquiry letter should have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Openings

The buyer may/can mention an advertisement as the source of information.

a) I refer to your advertisement in theof.....date advertising the new range of.....and I wish to inquire about it.

b) I write to inquire aboutadvertised by you in the Times of India, dated..... Or the individual or the firm may furnish a brief self - introduction

a) We are a large chain of retailers and we are looking for.....

b) We wish to replace steel cutlery in 25 of our J.P.Group of Hotels. Or the firm may begin by stating the purpose right away.

a) We are an established chain of hotels in North India We wish to replace the crockery in all our establishments.

Middle

Buyer requests for the price-list and catalogue:

We request you to send your price-list/catalogue/quotation at your earliest/latest by....

End

Buyer inquiries about the discounts/ concessions given:

(a) We request you to provide more details about your 20% discount scheme.

(b) We expect 10% discount on current prices offered to educational institutions. Buyer tries to induce seller into giving him most competitive /reasonable prices. Reasonable prices, excellent quality product and service will induce us to place future replacement orders with you.

Example: Inquiry

Reply to inquiry: This is a letter which the seller writes when he responds to the buyer's letter of inquiry. He thanks the buyer for showing interest in his products; encloses his best prices/catalogue/quotations; makes a special mention of discounts so as to induce the buyer to place an early order.

Example: Reply to inquiry

Shah Computer Accessories

.....

23rd April 2008.

Anupam Stores

.....

Dear Sir,

I refer to you advertisement in today's Times of India, announcing the latest range of computer accessories. My computer shop enjoys sound reputation in the area. I am interested in the new products advertised by you. As my requirement is of a varied nature, I request you to send your latest price-list and catalogue. The advertisement mentions a special discount on large orders. Please furnish me with more details about this.

Yours truly

.....

Anupam Stores

.....

29th April 2008

Shah Computer Accessories.

.....

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your interest in our latest range of computer accessories. Our enclosed catalogue and the price-list will Order: After having collected the price-lists and quotations from various traders, the buyer places an order for goods. This letter is known as an order letter. An order letter is generally written in an order-form. If an organisation does not have an order-form, the buyer needs to write a letter. He places a sample order to begin with. This is known as a trial order. This will be followed by one or two repeat orders and the subsequent routine/regular order.

Drafting a letter placing an order:

Opening

Reference to the receipt of price-list and catalogue. We are happy to receive your letter dated....
Quoting your latest prices and the catalogue containing detailed illustration. After having found your prices most competitive, we have decided to place our first order/ trial order for.....

Middle

This will contain a detailed description of the order, such as specifications regarding the required quantity, quality, colour, model, packaging instructions, terms and conditions, cancellation clause if goods are not up to the mark, or arrive late etc., modes of payment—advance, partial, payment on delivery.

End

Specifies the expected date of the supply of order and a future promise clause.

Example

The buyer, if satisfied, as mentioned earlier, may place a repeat order. But if s/he is dissatisfied on account of poor quality, service, or delayed delivery, s/he may be forced to cancel her/his order. In such cases, s/he may return the order and ask for a refund. Or, s/he may keep the order but ask permission to sell the goods at a discounted price.

Credit and Status Enquiry: At times the buyer may have to buy his products on credit; which means he may not be able to buy them on cash basis. The word credit originates from the word Credo 'which means I Believe'. Credit is thus an arrangement between a buyer and a seller, by which the buyer can avail goods today and for which he can make payment at a later /future date. Before granting credit to the prospective buyer, the seller will try and find out if the buyer is credit-worthy;

25th Nov 2008

Shaman Toys

.....

Trial Order

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your prompt reply to our inquiry for Shaman toys. As we find your prices reasonable, we wish to place a trial order for 50 sets of toys worth Rs.60, 000/-, the details of which are enclosed. Please note that the order must reach us by the first week of December. Excellent workmanship and use of non- hazardous colours would create a way for future orders. Payment will be made on C.O.D. basis. We will expect a 10% discount on the initial order. Please note that goods supplied in excess, or of inferior quality, or in damaged condition will be returned to you at your cost.

Yours Truly,

.....

Encl:

Detailed Order whether s/he [the seller] can recover her/his amount form the buyer. This investigation about the credit-standing of the buyer, or her/his credit worthiness is known as status inquiry. If the information about buyer is positive, the seller grants her/him credit. If it is not, then the seller tactfully refuses to supply the order on credit, and induces the buyer to buy the product on cash basis.

Following are the steps involved in Credit Correspondence:

[Status Inquiry]

1. A buyer applies to a seller for the supply of order on credit
2. The seller requests the buyer to furnish Trade References/ Bank references/ Financial Documents etc.
3. The buyer, after seeking referees 'consent, supplies references to the seller.
4. The seller then takes up these references. Which means she/he writes to these referees and inquiries about the credit standing of the buyer.
5. Referees 'replies form the next step in credit correspondence. The reply from the referee could be positive, negative, non-committal or partially favourable or unfavourable. [Credit]
6. Letter granting credit/ the seller grants credit to the buyer
7. Letter refusing to grant credit/The seller refuses to grant credit to the buyer.

Credit Correspondence:

Example1: Buyer's application.

.....

1st February, 2007

Seamless Computer Suppliers

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Credit Order.

Example 2: Seller requests References

Example 3: Customer Supplies References

Seamless Computers

.....

8th Feb, 2007

The Proprietor

Compulink

Dear Sir,

Sub: Request for References.

We thank you for your order of 1 February for 25 Acer laptop computers. Since this is your first order with us, we would like to inform you that it is our practice to ask customers for trade references. Would you therefore send us, by return post, the names and addresses of two trade referees with whom you have been dealing in the recent past? We look forward to serving you,

Yours truly

.....

Compulink

.....

20th Feb, 2007

Seamless Computers

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Supplying References

We acknowledge the receipt of your letter asking us to supply the names of trade referees.

Example 4: Seller taking up references.

[The next stage is that of referees 'response. The referee may give a positive, negative, partial or non-committal reply. While replying to a credit enquiry the referee will avoid commenting on the character of the applicant. He will restrict his comment to his personal experience of the applicant. He will avoid advising the seller. All such replies will be marked —Private and Confidential.]

Example 5: Referees 'replies: (a) Favourable Private and Confidential

Seamless Computers

.....

21st Feb, 2007

M/s.....

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Status Inquiry

We are an established wholesale dealer in electronic equipment.....in Mumbai. Mr. Of Compulink, who has placed an order for 25 Acer laptop computers on six months credit with us, has given your name as one of his referees. We request you to furnish us with information about the credit standing of Mr..... We assure you that any information you give us will be treated as private and confidential.

Yours truly

.....

M/s.....

.....

24th Feb, 2008

Seamless Computers

.....

.....

.....

b) Example: Unfavourable Reply Private and Confidential We are happy to inform you that we have been doing business with them for the last 15 years and we have found them trustworthy and reliable. They have placed regular credit orders with us in the past and have always paid their dues on time. We hope this information will be helpful and understand that you will treat it as confidential.

Yours truly

.....

M/s.....

24th Feb, 2008

Seamless Computers

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Reply to Credit Inquiry

We acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated..... Requesting credit information about..... We have been dealing with them for almost ten years now. They placed regular orders with us in the past. While, initially, they always paid their dues on net dates, they occasionally did not do so. In fact, in recent times, after their failure to pay on time, we started dealing with them only on cash basis. We feel that one should exercise caution while dealing with them. We have exchanged this information in good faith, and we trust you will treat it as strictly private and confidential.

Example 6: Letter granting Credit

Seamless Computers

.....

1st March, 2007

Compulink

.....

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Approving Credit Order

We sincerely thank you for supplying the credit references so promptly. We are happy to inform you that we will supply your order for 25Acer Laptop computers on six months credit period. We are enclosing our catalogue, order form and a copy of credit application form for your convenience. Please send us, by return post, your specifications along with the signed credit form, so that we can supply your order within the next four working days. We hope this will mark the beginning of a long-standing business association between us.

Yours truly

.....

Example 7: Letter refusing Credit One has to be tactful while writing negative replies. The seller generally refuses credit when he receives negative replies about the credit standing of the buyer. Yet, it is unwise to tell the buyer that s/he [seller] has received a negative reply about her/him [the buyer]. The seller, while saying no, tactfully avoids giving a direct negative response and tries to put the message in as positive terms as possible.

Collection or Dunning Letters: Letters that are written to recover outstanding amounts are known as collection letters. Despite every possible care having been taken by the seller before supplying order on credit, it is possible that the buyer fails to repay on time. These letters are then written to collect such outstanding payments. Since a credit order is extended after a cautious scrutiny, when the buyer fails to pay on time, it is believed

Seamless Computers

.....

1st March, 2007

Compulink

.....

Dear Sir,

We sincerely thank you for providing us the references so promptly. We, however, have to inform you with regret that we cannot process your credit order as the market conditions are not

Favourable. We have decided not to process any credit order for the next six months. As such, we will have to put your credit order on hold. In the meanwhile, you could avail of a special 15% discount which we are offering to a few of our select customers, if you place your order before 20 March.

We look forward to serving you,

Yours truly

.....

That the buyer may be having a genuine difficulty due to which he has failed to make payment; or the lapse may be due to an oversight. Before declaring the buyer a defaulter, the seller wants to give him the benefit of doubt. Therefore, he sends letters in stages to enable the buyer to make payment. After having written three such letters, the seller takes a firm stand and demands payment within a stipulated period of time. He may also extend a helping hand to the buyer in order to make the buyer respond positively. Finally, when he is left with no alternative, he sends a warning letter, giving the buyer a specific period in which to settle his dues. If the buyer fails to pay up even then, legal action is taken against the defaulting buyer.

There are five stages of collection.

Examples of Collection Series:

Letter No. 1

Letter No. 2

Matrix.....

5th Feb, 2008

Alyn Fernandez

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Account No.....

We do not appear to have received payment of the above account for Rs. 25,000/-, already a month overdue. It is possible that you have not received the statement of account sent to you on 1 January. We enclose a copy of the same, and request you to make payment before 15 February.

Yours truly

.....

Encl: Copy of statement

Matrix.....

25th Feb, 2008

Alyn Fernandez

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Your Outstanding Account: 1st reminder

We are surprised that we have neither received our payments for Rs. 25000/- outstanding on the above account, nor have we received any reply to our letter of 5 February, wherein we had

Letter No. 3

Letter No. 4

Matrix.....

15th March, 2008

Alyn Fernandez

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Your Outstanding Account: 2nd reminder

Our records indicate that your account is now more than 60 days past due. We feel concerned as you have not responded to either of our letters sent to you on ...5 and 25 February..... We cannot allow this situation to continue indefinitely and therefore must press for immediate payment. Considering our long association in the past, we are ready to give you an opportunity to explain, within the next two days, why the outstanding balance of Rs.25000/- could not be paid on time, failing which we would be forced to consider other alternatives.

Yours truly

.....

Matrix.....

1st April, 2008

MATERIAL COLLATED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Alyn Fernandez

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Your Outstanding Account: 3rd reminder

We very much regret that we have received no reply to the follow-up letter we sent you on 15 March ...requesting you to respond to our reminders for your outstanding payment

Letter No. 5

[These letters form the substance of routine external correspondence in the organization. While letters of inquiry have almost become a part of history, order letters are sent in customized and standard formats. Credit and collection letters are generally never handled by junior staff. They are handled by either the senior executives who have the requisite experience, or by the Company Secretary or a more competent authority.]

Matrix.....

30th April, 2008

Alyn Fernandez

.....

Dear Sir,

Sub: Your Outstanding Account: Final letter

It is with utmost regret that we have to inform you that, despite having treated you with every possible consideration, we have neither heard from you, nor have we received the payment of Rs.25000/- still outstanding on your account with us. We are convinced that we have shown sufficient patience, but we are now left with no option but to recover payment at law. The matter will now be, regretfully, placed in the hands of our solicitors.

Yours truly

.....

COMPLAINTS, CLAIMS & ADJUSTMENTS

A Complaint Letter is written by a dissatisfied customer, expecting the organization to resolve the problem by offering him/her adequate compensation. The contention may be with regard to the quality, quantity, pricing or after-sales service in case of a product. It may be related to the nature, competence, or efficiency in case of a service. The letter should logically explain the dispute, supported by documents and other kinds of evidence.

What is a Claim?

A claim may be defined as a demand of action made by a customer to compensate him/her for any mechanical, physical or functional defect in a product purchased, and perceived inadequacies in service obtained. Granting claims and making adjustments: Being sensitive to the concerns and demands of customers, promptly handling their claims, and amicably resolving problems reap obvious benefits for an organization. In a competitive marketplace, it earns the goodwill and loyalty of customers. Good customer relations are a priority for any organisation which wants to grow. The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, aids consumers to recover damages, prompting companies to take appropriate steps to resolve customer complaints. It is well within the rights of an organisation to verify the complaint and offer compensation only when it is found genuine. A response to a complaint letter detailing action taken is called a letter of adjustment.

When does a customer make a Complaint?

A customer complains when he is dissatisfied with the quality or quantity of the product the pricing is incorrect or there is a mistake in billing the packing is not to standard specifications for a particular product the order arrives late, is in excess, in a damaged condition, or is different from the one placed he is dissatisfied with the service, or after-sales service Apart from these, there could be many other situations when a customer may have to take recourse to such letters.

Drafting a Letter of Complaint:

While drafting a complaint letter, one must be rational and use reason instead of emotions. Getting a timely and adequate compensation depends on whether the dispute is explained and phrased logically. The writer could

- Begin with a clear statement of a problem sequentially
- Support his claim with documents, endorsements and
- Establish his contention
- Clearly state what kinds of compensation he expects

Or

- Begin by providing the details of order
- State the nature of complaint
- Suggest action/compensation

Example 1

Abhiram Athwale

4, Jeevan Vikas,

Dadar Central,

Mumbai 400006.

December 25, 2007

The Manager,

Canberry India,

Worli,

Mumbai 400 018.

Dear Sir,

Sub: Complaint against substandard quality of Fruit'n'Nut Chocolates

This is to bring to your notice that the above-mentioned chocolates were found to contain worms. The samples in question, 20 gift-boxes of chocolates, were purchased on December 24, from the famous Deal'shop, located in Dadar, Mumbai. I would like to lodge an official complaint about the quality of these Fruit n Nut Chocolates supplied by your company which manufactures them. T

The chocolates were purchased for distribution in an orphanage. To our utter disgust and shock, each box opened was found infested with worms. The chocolates were well within the printed date of expiry, which is February 20, 2008. Your chocolates pose a great health risk for consumers, most of whom may be children.

I request you to withdraw the entire lot from the market immediately, and compensate me with fresh batches of the same chocolates.

Yours truly,

Abhiram Athwale

II. Drafting a Letter of Adjustment / Settlement

A letter of adjustment has three goals:

- To reach out to the customer and verify the complaint
- To explain the cause / reason behind the inadequacies in product or service
- To regain the confidence of the customer and promote further business

Letters of Adjustment

A letter of adjustment is written to

1. Acknowledge the receipt of the letter of complaint and thank the customer for writing it

2. Express regret for the cause of complaint
3. Explain the situation
4. State the action taken.
5. communicate one's genuine concern

Example 1: Response to complaint letter

Cranberry India Ltd.

Worli, Mumbai

Ref no.320/ cw/01

Dec 26, 2007

Mr Abhiram Athwale,

4, Jeevan Vikas,

Dadar Central,

Mumbai 400 006.

Dear Sir,

Response to your Letter of Complaint about Fruit'n'Nut Chocolates.

We sincerely thank you for informing us about worm infestation in the Gift Boxes of Fruit'n'Nut chocolates, and deeply regret the inconvenience caused to you by this. Following your letter, we have immediately withdrawn the entire batch of chocolates from markets across the country.

We are a responsible corporate concern and since this is indeed a very serious issue as rightly pointed out by you, we immediately launched an investigation into the matter. We were relieved to find that there was nothing wrong with the packaging or manufacturing processes. The chocolates were stored in improper temperature, which made them soggy and moist, leading to the germination of worms. On inquiring, our distributors claimed that prolonged periods of power-cuts led to the current crisis.

Now, we have convened a meeting of our distributors along with our R&D experts to take appropriate measures so that such a situation never recurs. As a token of our appreciation of your concern, we send you a carton of fresh chocolates which you can distribute among the children of the orphanage.

Example 2: Complaint regarding service

Example 2: Complaint regarding Letter

3, Silver Moon Apts.

Baba D'souza Marg

Khar [W]

Mumbai 053.

18th Sept, 2008

HSCC Bank

16th Road ,Khar Danda,

Khar [W].Mumbai 400 053.

Dear Madam,

I am a customer of your bank, having a Third Party Overseas Transfer [TPOT] Account, (number 55786657). I have not been able to operate my account for the last two days as your server is down. Since my business runs on the Internet, the non-transfer of funds for the last two days has caused me a great deal of inconvenience and loss of customer confidence. It is difficult to believe that a prime bank like HSCC does not have any alternative and can do nothing for its customers, except to let them suffer.

I request you to resolve the matter immediately, or I will have no choice but to withdraw business from your bank and shift my account another more efficient bank.

Yours faithfully,

M. Alvares

Example 3: Adjustment Letter

HSCC Bank

16th Road, Khar Danda,

Khar [W], Mumbai 400 053.

Ref No. 320/cw/02

20th Sept, 2008

Mrs.Margaret Alvares

3, Silver Moon Apts.

Baba D'souza Marg

Khar [W]

Mumbai 400 053

Dear Madam,

We thank you for your letter dated September 18. We deeply regret the technical snag that inconvenienced many of our valuable customers. We fully understand the seriousness of the matter and welcome your suggestion for an alternative arrangement, should the server fail in future. Our technical team is working on such an alternative, and we promise that there will be no such technical breakdowns in future. We once again thank you for being our valued customer and expect your continued patronage.

Sincere regards,
Yours truly,
Mrs. Alia Sinha,
Branch Manager,
HSCC, Khar

Example 4: Letter of Complaint: Poor Quality

SR Home Appliances,

Kandivali [W],

Mumbai 400068

Tel: (022) 66677888

19th Sept, 2008

The Proprietor,

Kitchen King Services,

Kanjur Marg [W],4000067

SUB: Substandard quality of steel kitchenware.

Sir.

We have been regular buyers of kitchenware from you for the past five years, but during the past two months, we have received many complaints about the quality of the stainless steel utensils. Most customers have complained that these steel utensils rust in no time. To be precise, we have had to replace six such orders in order to satisfy our customers. This is a matter of serious concern to us, as this may affect our image adversely. If the word spreads, it will immediately result in loss of business. We are sending back the utensils exchanged. We expect you to replace these within 15 days. We also request you to take necessary steps and ensure that the next lot sent to us is of standard quality.

Yours sincerely,

.....

Manager,

SR Home Appliances.

Example 5: Response to Letter of Complaint: Poor

Quality following a labour dispute

The Proprietor,

Kitchen King Services,

Kanjur Marg [W],

Mumbai-4000067.

26th Sept, 2008

SR Home Appliances,

Kandivali [W],

Mumbai 400068.

Tel: 2 66677888

Ref. No. 321/cw/04

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of complaint dated September 19, 2008. We indeed regret the poor quality of the steel kitchenware supplied to you, and sincerely apologize for the problems you had to face. Following a labour dispute we had to temporarily stop our production for a fortnight, and were compelled to make alternate arrangements with the renowned exporters, Guarantee Steels, for supplying the merchandise to all our customers. We never doubted the quality of their product, but, having received your complaint, we will now take up the matter with them. I may also inform you that the dispute in our plant has been resolved, and we will shortly resume supplies. We are sending you the replacement order at our earliest.

Yours faithfully,

M.Subramanyam,

Proprietor.

III. Handling Negative Messages: Refusal to Settle

Claims:

It is not possible for a seller to grant all the claims, particularly when the demand of the customer is unreasonable. To communicate politely to the customer/s one's inability to accede to the unreasonable demands, and still retain their goodwill is a challenging task. To draft such a letter is a delicate matter. One's refusal must not translate into blaming the customer, even if he is at fault. The seller must sound concerned and understanding, and try to be as objective as possible in his explanation.

Example 1: Refusing Adjustment

Example 2 : Refusing Adjustment

Dear Sir,

We are sorry to learn that the music system you purchased under bill no 1234, on February 25, 2008 has developed technical defects. We find that you have asked us for a replacement. In this connection, however, we must bring to your notice that according to the conditions of warranty, if any device is found defective, it must be brought back directly to the original seller. Our inspection reveals that you had called a local mechanic who tampered with the system.

We regret to communicate to you that we cannot grant you any relief under these circumstances. We would like to suggest that you consult our technical department, who can repair the defect, but against payment of charges.

Yours truly

.....

CONSUMER GRIEVANCE LETTERS

Introduction:

What is Consumer Guidance?

Consumer Guidance means imparting education, information, instruction and training to consumers with regard to their buying activities. The first and foremost objective of the Consumer Guidance Cell is to make consumers aware that they have legitimate rights as consumers. The purpose of the endeavour is to make consumers aware about the possible malpractices and the consequent victimization on account of their lack of knowledge about the consumer's rights. In a country like India, a majority of consumers are uneducated, poor and unorganized. They fall an easy prey to the exploitative practices of traders. Consumer education equips them to exercise their rights as consumers. Consumer organizations work towards consumer education, establishment of legal redressal systems, appropriate punitive measures against offenders and, in general, for protection of consumers from the malpractices in the commercial world.

CPA [Consumer Protection Act] of 1986 – the law that revolutionised the life of a consumer, and also learn how to redress consumer complaints. [It has been decided by the Government of India to celebrate December 24 as the National Consumer Day in India. It was on this day that the President of India gave assent to the Consumer Protection Act in 1986. The World Consumers 'Rights day is celebrated all over the world on March 15.]

THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 1986

Though a consumer is ideally the king, he has been the most vulnerable entity in the entire marketing system in India. He has been subjected to the worst kind of exploitation at the hands of mighty traders. The Government of India enacted a comprehensive legislation called The Consumer Protection Act, in order to safeguard the interests of consumers. The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, applies to all goods and services, excluding goods for resale or for commercial purpose, and services that are rendered free of charge and under a contract for personal service. The provisions of the Act are compensatory in nature. It covers public, private, joint and cooperative sectors.

Who is a Consumer?

According to the act, —A consumer is any person who buys any goods for a consideration [price], and is the user of such goods, where the use is with the approval of the buyer, any person who hires/avails of any service for a consideration [price], and any beneficiary of such services, where such services are availed of with the approval of the person hiring the service. [www.cgi.com] this means that if Mrs. Pandya purchased a car for her personal use by making

full payment, she is a consumer. If she has made a partial payment, or paid her first installment of Rs. 45000/, she is still a consumer. If Mrs. Pandya availed herself of any services – like airline, railways, medical treatment, she is a consumer. However, if she is a trader, who has purchased a car with an intention to sell, she is not a consumer. Goods: The act defines ‘Goods’ as any movable property which also includes shares, but does not include any actionable claims. Service: It defines ‘Service’ as service of any description such as banking, insurance, transport, processing, housing construction, supply of electrical energy, entertainment, board or lodging.

Rights of the Consumer: CPA has framed the following rights of the consumer.

Right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property. Right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices. Right to be assured of, wherever possible, access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices. Right to be heard and to be assured that consumers’ interests will receive due consideration at appropriate forums. Right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices and unscrupulous exploitation of consumers.

Right to Consumer Education.

Nature of complaint: A consumer can complain against

- i. Any unfair trade practice or restrictive trade practice adopted by the trader
- ii. Defective goods
- iii. Deficiency in service
- iv. Excess price charged by the trader
- v. Unlawful sale of goods which is hazardous to life and safety when used.

How to lodge a Complaint?

A complaint, handwritten or typed, can be filed by a consumer to a registered consumer organisation, Central or State Government, and by one or more consumers where there are numerous consumers having the same interest. No stamp or court fee is needed. The nature of complaint must be clearly mentioned, as well as the relief [compensation] sought by the consumer. Complaint must be in quadruplicate [four copies], in district forum or state commission. Else, additional copies are required to be filed. Complaint is to be filed within two years of buying the product or using the service. Complaint needs to be in writing, and should be acknowledged. Letters should be sent by registered post or should be hand-delivered against acknowledgement. In the complaint, consumer should clearly mention the name and address of the person who is complaining and against whom the complaint is being filed. Copies of relevant documents must be enclosed. The consumer must mention details of the problem and the demand on the company for compensation. This could be replacement of the product, removal of the defect, refund of money, or compensation for expenses incurred and for physical/mental torture. However, he has to ensure that the claims are reasonable. The consumer must preserve all bills, receipts and proof of correspondence related to the case. He must avoid using voice mail or telephone because such communications cannot be proved. The complaint can be in any Indian language, but it is better to use English. There is no compulsion

to hire a lawyer. Main cost consists of correspondence and travelling to consumer forum for the hearing.

Grant of Relief [Nature of compensation]: CPA provides for following types of compensation.

- a. Repair of defective goods
- b. Replacement of defective goods
- c. Refund of the price paid for the defective goods or service
- d. Removal of deficiency in service
- e. Refund of extra money charged
- f. Withdrawal of goods hazardous to life and safety
- g. Compensation for the loss or injury suffered by the consumer due to negligence of the opposite party
- h. Adequate cost of filing and pursuing the complaint normally, complaints should be decided within 90 days from the date of notice issued to the opposite party. Where a sample of any goods is required to be tested, a complaint is required to be disposed of within 150 days; it may take more time due to practical problems.

Consumer Protection Councils:

Councils have been set up in all States and at the Centre to promote and protect the rights and interests of consumers. These councils are advisory in nature and can play an important role in recommending consumer oriented policies to the State and Central Governments.

The objective of the act is to:

Provide simple, speedy, inexpensive redressal to consumer grievances.

Provide this three-tier quasi-judicial machinery at the national, state and district level National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission: Deals with claims above Rs. 1 crore and above Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission or State Commission: Deals with claims from Rs.20 lakhs to 1 crore Consumer Dispute Redressal Forum or District Forum: Deals with claims upto Rs.20 Lakhs. The set-up of the consumer forum is geared to provide relief to both parties, and discourage long litigation. In a process called 'informal adjudication', forum officials mediate between the two parties and urge compromise. The forum is expected to dispose of an complaint within three months from the date on which notice is given to the opposite party. On receiving a complaint, the company against whom the complaint is received is intimated, with a copy of the complaint letter. The concerned company is supposed to reply within 45 days of receiving the notice from the forum. Once the company sends its reply, the Forum can set the date for a hearing, where the complainant and the opposite party can present their arguments. If the opposite party does not appear in court despite repeated notices and reminders, the court may decide the matter in its absence and give an ex-parte decision. The Forum can sentence the party to a maximum of three years' imprisonment and impose a fine of Rs. 10,000. The Forum can also issue warrants to produce defaulters in court. It can use the police and revenue departments to enforce orders. One should once again note that consumer courts provide

redress only in cases of products or services for personal use. They do not entertain complaints about, or provide any redress for, defects in products used for commercial purposes.

Some of the active consumer organisations:

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat

Grahak Bhavan, Sant Dhyaneswar Marg,

Juhu Vile Parle Development Scheme,

Near Cooper Hospital, Mumbai 400056.

Tel: 022-6209319.

Consumer Guidance Society of India

J' Hutment, Mahapalika Marg,

Opp Cama and Albless Hospital,

Mumbai 400001. Tel: 022-2621612

Common Cause

A-31, West End, New Delhi 110021.

Tel: 011-6876666.

Voluntary Organisation in Interest of Consumer Education

F-71, Lajpat Nagar II, New Delhi 110024.

Tel: 011-6918969/6315375.

In Mumbai and Thane complaints at the district level should be addressed to:

1. The President [City Limits],

Bombay District Consumer Disputes Redressal

Forum

Madhu Industrial Estate, 1st floor,

Panduranga Budhkar Marg,

Worli, Mumbai 400 013.

2. The President [Suburban Limits]

Consumer Redressal Forum

Sudarshan Building,

Gokhale Road,

Dadar, Mumbai 400028

3. The President

District Consumer Redressal Forum, 2nd floor

Collector's Office, Court Naka

Thane [W], 400601

Drafting of Redress letters under Consumer

Guidance:

A consumer redress letter is drafted like any complaint letter. However, it is only after the seller has ignored, or failed to respond to a customer's complaint, that the customer should approach the consumer forum. He should give all the details of the complaint and substantiate them with all the necessary documents. He should then request the consumer redress cell to take up his matter on his behalf and ask for justice. He should also clearly state the kind of compensation he has in mind. There is a format in which consumer guidance letters are generally drafted. This includes

- a) The name of the complainant
- b) The name of the company/organization/concern i.e. the opposite party against whom the complaint is being made.
- c) The nature of the complaint.
- d) Prayer i.e. Terms of Compensation

Example 1: Consumer Redress Letters

Mr. Amar Khan

B-16, Alam Gir Apts.

Azad Rd. Thane [W] , 401203.

September 15, 2008

The President

Consumer Guidance Redressal Forum

.....

Complainant: Mr. Amar Khan Dispute Against / Opposite Party: Mohata Builders

Nature of Complaint: Levying of excess charges.

Dear Sir,

I request you to take up my dispute with Mohata Builders, who have failed to give me the possession of my flat at 5 B,Ajanta Gardens situated at Gorai Rd, Boriwali [W], as promised. I had entered into a proper agreement with Mohata Builders, when I booked a one BHK flat admeasuring 540 sq ft for Rs. 20 lakhs, in their newly constructed housing scheme at Gorai. In accordance with the terms of agreement, I paid Rs.6 lakhs at the time of registration of the said agreement. After the payment of my last installment on 18th December, 2007, on requesting the keys to the flat, I was told by the supervisor that I would be given the keys on 2nd February,

as some work was still to be completed. In good faith I agreed to wait till 2nd February, 2008. When I approached them on 7th February, 2008, the supervisor made a demand of an additional amount of Rs.1 lakh, towards the increased cost of construction. On my refusing to pay the extra amount, he refused to hand over the keys to me. Almost eight months have passed and I have still not been given the possession of the flat. After having failed to meet the Mohatas in person, I sent them three registered letters, to which I have received no answer till date. I, therefore, request you to take up my matter and help me in getting the following compensation:

1. Immediate possession of my flat
 2. The amount paid towards rent at Rs. 15,000/ per month for the last 8 months
 3. A written apology for the harassment I have been subjected to I am enclosing
1. A Copy of the registered agreement
 2. Receipts of the payments made
 3. Copies of the registered letters and postal receipts I hope to receive a sympathetic response soon.

Yours truly

.....

Example 2: Consumer Product

Mrs.Anaita Dewani

C-6, Bella Donna Apts.

Bhanushali Rd, Khar [w]

Mumbai 400013.

February 10,2009

The President

District Consumer Forum

.....

Opposite Party ... : Waly's Departmental Store

Nature of Complaint: Delivery of a different model of

Videocon TV

Dear Sir,

I seek your assistance in solving my dispute with the famous Waly's Departmental Stores , at Bandra [W]. On 23rd December, 2008, I purchased a 51 inches Videocon Plasma T.V., [brand name Tiara], for Rs.1 lakh 10 thousand, from Wali's Stores at Bandra [W]. Since the store promised home delivery, I left the store after making the payment in cash. Wali's Stores made the delivery after two days. On opening the carton, however, I realized it was not the brand that I had selected and paid for. The store had sent me a 49inches Sim Sim brand, instead of the 51

inches Tiara brand. I refused to sign the delivery papers and rang up Wali's Stores for replacement of the TV. But the manager refused to accept the fact that I had selected a model different from the one that was delivered to me. After this, I first tried to personally contact and explain the problem to the management, but to no avail. Subsequently, I sent two registered letters notifying my complaint in detail, and asking for a replacement. I have not received any response from the store's management till date. I, therefore, request you to intervene and help me in getting replacement of the TV that I was wrongfully delivered. I also want a written apology and an award of Rs. 2000/ towards all the expenses that I have incurred in pursuing this matter.

Example 3

I am enclosing the receipt for payment, the receipts of the registered letters, and photocopies of the letters sent. I hope to receive your immediate attention.

Yours truly,

Anaita Dewani

Enclosures:

1. Receipts of payment
2. Receipts of the registered letters
3. Photocopies of the registered letters.

THE SALES LETTER

Introduction:

In the current scenario of an increasingly competitive commercial world characterized by rising advertising and operations costs, the sales letter forms an important and strategic tool of direct marketing. This is because the sales letter scores with its distinct advantages over direct and door-to-door sales. The first important factor to consider is the cost. Using sales letters is much, much cheaper, as the organisation does not incur the cost of hiring space and sales personnel. It saves on the maintenance charges of the former, and the training and salary of the latter. Even taking into account the cost of designing, printing and postage, the cost to the company for the sales letter is negligible as compared to other forms of sale. Secondly, the sales letter can have an extended reach and be dispatched far and wide. It is also more focused in its target and can be directed at only a particular segment of the potential customer whom the product or service may benefit. By virtue of being a personalised letter, it can appeal to customers who appreciate a personal touch.

Moreover, the reading of a sales letter can secure the reader's attention without other competitive factors such as music, TV, or actual speech, as one can read the letter at one's convenience. Companies and other commercial establishments vie with one another to compile precious consumer data banks which help in the dispatch of the sales letter, as well as other forms of sales, such as tele-marketing.

A creatively well-designed and an attractively written sales letter could be a powerful tool. But drafting such a letter has its own challenges. Firstly, in this busy world with its frenetic, rushed pace, not many people have the time to go through a letter carefully. Secondly, if one is not interested in making a purchase, the best letter may be in vain. In fact, if statistics are to be believed, sales letters result in just a meagre one or two percent of readers actually making a purchase. However, when compared to the cost of other means, it is still far economical. Lastly, since it forms unsolicited communication, it may cause irritation and impatience. It can have the same effect as 'spam' or unsolicited e-mail or unasked-for SMS text messages received on mobile phones. They are simply deleted without a look, or totally discarded as 'junk-mail'.

It is therefore imperative that a sales letter be crafted with great care. Some useful tips may be borne in mind:

- i) Use the You-attitude to make it personalized.
- ii) Make it attractive and eye-catching, both in appearance and text.
- iii) Try and evoke the curiosity of the reader to ensure that it gets read. The above objectives can be achieved in various ways. The use of colours and graphics is an important tool that cannot be dismissed. The envelope itself often succeeds in grabbing the readers' attention. The announcements of discounts, offers of free gifts or surprise items can also prove effective. As marketing and sales form one of the very pillars on which the success of the business depends, much research and study has been carried out on consumer behaviour, especially the art of persuasion that results in purchase. Persuasion means succeeding in causing people to do something that they would not otherwise have done. A sales pitch is aimed at targeting the potential buyer's perceived need by appealing to one or more of varied factors. Several models have been drawn up to explain the behaviour of consumers, from the moment they notice a

product to the point when they actually buy the product or service. However, the most popular of them all is the AIDA model, where A denotes Attention, I, Interest, D, Desire and A, Action.

i) A—the sales letter therefore has to first and foremost arrest the attention of the reader. Apart from the use of colour and images as mentioned earlier, the letter in the introductory paragraph could also use a quotation or statistical data or a popular proverb or even pose a rhetorical question.

For example:

i. for a self-help book: —An optimist sees an opportunity in every difficulty, a pessimist, a difficulty in every opportunity. | Sir Winston Churchill.

ii. for a savings plan: Do you know that 60% of people have no concrete plans in place for post-retirement financial needs?

iii. For a leak-proof cement filling: A stitch in time saves nine.

iv. for a safety house-lock: Would you neglect the safety of your house before you leave on vacation? One of the popular ways to attract attention is also by using an unusual format, particularly the Hanging Indented 'one (as shown in the example at the end).

ii) To evoke the interest of a reader, one could appeal to emotion, rationality or the fear factor. The appeal to emotion is the strongest determinant. One may appeal to the emotion of love or fear. Thus, love and care of family may prompt a home-maker to buy a particular brand of healthy oil. The appeal to safety, again, may determine her choice of a water purifier. The factor of fear may be the motivating factor in selling insurance policies or a car with safety features like air-bags. Appeal to rationality will focus on the reasons why one may go in for a product. For example, the reasons why one should join a particular gym: the multiple benefits it will yield in terms of health, good physique, and confidence, all in a hygienic and pleasant ambience. To sum up, a sales letter succeeds if it makes an appeal to the buying motive of the customer.

iii) an effective sales letter will succeed in making the reader desire the product or service. This can be achieved by providing information about the benefits the product will give the buyer.

For example:

i. This T-shirt is sure to make you stand out in a crowd!

ii. This SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) will put all your financial worries at rest without pinching your pocket!

iii. For a wrist watch: Be in tune with tomorrow. Be the envy of your company!

iv) Finally, it is imperative to ensure that the reader of the sales letter takes action at the right time. To propel the reader towards this step, companies may again make promotional offers, or offer discounts or free gifts, or tension-free delivery and service.

For example:

i. Hop into the nearest dealer's and collect your free gift with an immediate purchase. Hurry! limited offer!

ii. Post the reply paid card in the nearest post-box and await your surprise next week!

Example : 1

The Personality Development Centre

27, Coronet Plaza,

Mumbai-400 030.

15 May, 2008.

Ms. Sanaa Talwar,

6, Palm Court,

Mumbai - 400 050.

Dear Ms. Talwar,

Time once lost is lost forever!

Surely you are not just one of those youngsters who only flow with the tide? If you wish to make the most of the long post- school vacation and exciting college years ahead, you couldn't do better than join the 'Personality Plus Programme'. This is an ideal three week course specially designed for fresh college entrants. It will help you develop confidence in speech, deportment and making presentations, thereby aiding you in making a mark in your college. This rich value-addition will not only make your college years a time to cherish, but also groom you for a corporate career.

Example: 2

Time and tide wait for no one. Ensure your participation in this prestigious Programme by early registration, as only a limited number of students with potential have been invited, and the seats will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Please note that registrations will end on May 25, 2008.

Sincerely yours

(Ekta Rathi)

Director

SWASTHYA

The Complete Fitness Boutique

21, Pali Hill, Bandra

Mumbai 400 050.

January 3, 2009.

Ms. Nausheen Nayar,

42, Hill Road,

Bandra,

MATERIAL COLLATED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Mumbai-400 050.

Dear Madam,

‘Health is Wealth’ is a timeless adage. The modern Indian’s health is under onslaught as never before, with the pressure of the growing economy, increased competition, air, water and food pollution, and a hectic lifestyle.

SWASTHYA is now here to relieve you of all your health problems. From timely check-up reminders to pick-up and drop back service, fitness and nutritional experts working in tandem to advise on your specific needs, a 24 hr emergency service – all at a nominal cost for members. In addition you also get to avail of the library and recreational facilities, all in clean, hygienic, pleasant and world class ambience. Do drop in at your convenience, for we know that seeing is believing. You may also wish to refer to some of our well-known members from your neighbourhood for your own satisfaction. Since the concessional membership scheme for the ‘Golden Club’ offered to the 50 plus is for a limited period only, we urge you not to trade this opportunity for a lifetime of regret! We await your call to fix an appointment for the walk-around and demo tour.

Yours truly,

Seema Malhotra

Handouts or flyers, also otherwise known as pamphlets, leaflets, fliers, handbills or brochures, are an alternate way of reaching out to the public in a more cost effective manner. They refer to a single sheet of paper, folded or plain, but not bound, that is attractively designed to draw the reader’s attention to a product, an event, a cause or special meeting.

Generally, an A4 or A5 size paper is used. DTP or Desk Top Publishing has made it very easy for even amateurs to use these. Although for ideal designing one could call for competence and excellence in terms of colour, design, graphics and layout, it is the verbal content that one needs to consider here. Apart from readability and legibility, one needs to also know the target audience so as to effectively communicate the content or the message. While readability refers to the ease with which the text and the graphics can be deciphered, legibility looks at the clarity, or the ability to convey the intended message. Needless to say, the text should be brief and succinct. It is not necessary that there be complete sentences; even phrases or standalone words would suffice.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

In a government of responsibility like ours, where the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but a few secrets. The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearings.

[Supreme Court in State of UP vs Raj Narain in 1975, Posted by RTI Act 2005 on June 25, 2006]

—What we have is an elective democracy, not a participatory democracy. This is because we have missed the essence of Lokshahi— which means Logon ki Shahenshahi. The essence of democracy is that the individual Citizen is a sovereign in her/his own right, and s/he gives up part of the sovereignty to the State, in return for which s/he gets the rule of law. This respect for YOU,

— The sovereign Citizen of India, and for the rule of law has been missed completely. Our Institutions have become playgrounds of the powerful, where the individual is helpless. If a Citizen approaches an elected representative, he may or may not get a hearing in 24 hours; if s/he writes to a Public servant s/he may or may not get an answer in 12 days; and if she approaches the Courts a BMW will metamorphose into a truck and the final decision will probably be obtained after a decade. The individual Citizen, instead of being respected, has become the 'bechara'. If Tilak were here today he would have again said, —Swaraj ha maza janmasiddh hakk ahe, ani to me milawnarchh, karan Swaraj keva aalach nahi. 15th August, 1947 only saw a transfer of Raj from the whites to the

browns.¶

[This is an extract from Shailesh Gandhi's speech, via e-mail, while accepting the Nani Palkhiwala Memorial Award on January 12, 2008.]

THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

INTRODUCTION:

The common citizen of India owes a debt to activist Shailesh Gandhi and, prior to him, to many others, who fought for the Right to Information Act and brought it into force. Its enactment, on 12 October 2005, by the Indian Parliament, in a sense is a culmination of a movement for the empowerment of the common man that had begun in 1990.

Purpose of the RTI Act:

An average citizen in India is at the mercy of authority that exploits him on account of his lack of information. Instances of a common man having to bribe the authority to collect the dead body of a relative from a government morgue, to collect birth/ employment/death certificate, to avail of a ration card, passport or pension has become a common norm. There are enumerable examples where he has become a victim at the hands of unscrupulous officials. With the RTI, it is now possible to make public servants accountable and to bring in transparency in the functioning of the government. The RTI empowers the common citizen with his fundamental right to question the authority and make it answerable. To be able to exercise this right, it is essential that students, who are the future of Indian democracy, become aware of the RTI Act and its provisions.

MATERIAL COLLATED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

The RTI ACT [2005]

The RTI Act mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information. Any ordinary citizen, regardless of caste or creed, can file a Right to Information application and the Government of India is compelled to respond.

1. What does Information mean?

Information means any material, in any form that includes records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form, and information relating to any private body, which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force, but does not include file noting.

2. What does Right to Information mean?

It includes the right to inspect works, documents, and records. Take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records. Take certified sample material. Obtain information in the form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes, or in any other electronic mode, or through printouts.

3. What is the Application Procedure for requesting information?

Apply in writing or through electronic means in English or Hindi or in the official language of the area, to the PIO [Public Information Officer], specifying the particulars of the information sought. Reasons for seeking information are not required to be given; Pay fees as may be prescribed (if not belonging to the below poverty line category).

4. What is the time limit to get the information?

30 days from the date of application

48 hours for information concerning the life and liberty of a person

5 days shall be added to the above response time, in as the application for information is given to Assistant

Public Information Officer.

If the interests of a third party are involved, then time limit will be 40 days (maximum period + time given to the party to make representation).

Failure to provide information within the specified period is deemed a refusal.

5. What are the penalty provisions?

Every PIO will be liable for a fine of Rs. 250/- per day, up to a maximum of Rs. 25,000/-, for not accepting an application delaying information release without reasonable cause malafidely denying information knowingly giving incomplete, incorrect, misleading information destroying information that has been requested obstructing furnishing of information in any manner.

The Information Commission (IC) at the Centre and the State levels will have the power to impose this penalty. The Information Commission can also recommend disciplinary action for violation of the law against an erring PIO.

II. How to file an RTI Application?

The process of filing the RTI query is simple.

Step 1

The letter asking for information must be addressed to the concerned Public Information Officer (PIO). In the following example the PIO is from the Ministry of Communications and Technology. His address is:

Shri B.B.Bahl,

Joint Director and PIO (RTI)

Office of PIO (RTI)

Room No 1016 Electronics Niketan

Department of Information Technology (DIT)

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

6, CGO Complex, New Delhi

Tel: 011-24301116

Fax: 011-24363099

Email: pio.dit_hq@mit.gov.in

Step 2

The subject of the letter could, for example, read like this:

SUB: Request to Information Regarding the Blocking of Internet domains

SUB: Request to information regarding the acquisition of land at Chinch Bhuvan Nagpur for the proposed Mihan Cargo-hub project.

The letter could begin thus:

I would like to use the Right to Information Act to ascertain the following:

1. Has there been a directive issued by the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology to block the domains
2. If so, why has this blanket block come into force?
3. Why have these particular domain names been specifically blocked?

Or

I own a 1500 sq ft plot of land at Chinch Bhuvan, which I am told has been acquired by the Aviation Ministry for the proposed cargo hub project. Could you please show me the notification that states this?

1. Could you tell me if the Government of India has devised any compensation plan for the land thus acquired?

2. Who is the competent authority whom we could approach? Please give us the names, addresses, contact details of the authority appointed to handle these issues. Note: Under the RTI Act, 2005, you are not compelled to give any reason for your application. So you can only include the questions if you like.

Step 3

Include your name and your full postal address at the end of the letter. This is extremely vital, so that the PIO can respond to your request. The information will be sent to you via post.

Step 4

Go to your nearest post office. A list of post offices accepting RTI applications is given here:

<http://www.indiapost.gov.in/rtimanual16a.html>

Step 5

Submit your application and pay Rs.10 at one of the eligible Post Offices and ensure that you get your receipt. This is once again vital as proof of your application. Make copies of your application for your future reference.

Step 6

Come home, and wait for the response. Allow 5 days for the Post Office to deliver the application to the PIO concerned, and 30 days after that for the PIO to respond to you. So within 35 days, the PIO MUST RESPOND.

THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT 2005

APPLICATION FOR OBTAINING INFORMATION

Date:

By speed Post AD

FILE NO.: _____ YEAR: _____

Central Public Information Officer

Regional Passport Office,

Place _____

1. Name of the applicant:

2. Full address [with phone No.]:

3. Particulars of information required:

As per enclosed list.

4. Details of payment of filing fees:

Indian Postal Order No. _____ dated _____ for Rs.10/- favouring —Regional Passport Officer|| [payable at place of submitting application] is enclosed.

OR

Photocopy of my BPL card/certificate is enclosed for exemption from fees.

5. Details of enclosures if any: Photocopy of application dated _____ for issue/renewal of passport.

6. Please rush the information to me by speed/registered post.

Signature of Applicant

[This format is prepared by an NGO in order to help people. It can be downloaded from the sites mentioned in the chapter. However, it is not necessary that the application should be made in this format only. Any hand written or typed letter will also be accepted.]

Sample Application Letter

Example 1:

Shri B.B.Bahl

Joint Director and PIO (RTI)

Office of PIO (RTI)

Room No 1016, Electronics Niketan

Department of Information Technology (DIT)

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

6, CGO Complex, New Delhi

Date: <Enter Date Here>

Sub: Information regarding the blocking of internet website domains

Dear Sir,

This is to bring to your notice that I, along with several other internet users across the country, am unable to access the following websites:

<http://www.blogspot.com>

<http://www.geocities.com>

<http://www.typepad.com>

As well as the following sub-domains:

http://sub-domain.blogspot.com

http://sub-domain.typepad.com

On asking the relevant ISPs, their users were told that these websites have been blocked under a directive of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India.

I would like to use the Right to Information Act to ascertain the following:

1. Has there been any such directive issued by the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology?
2. If so, why has this ban come into force?
3. Why have these particular domain names been specifically banned?
4. When will this ban cease to exist?
5. If no such directive has been issued, why are these websites being blocked?
6. Who is responsible for ensuring that Indian citizens have the freedom to access these websites?

Example 2:

To enquire about the Status of the Passport

8. If there has been a directive from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to block these websites, then, considering the fact that most of the websites blocked do not contain pornography, speeches of hate, contempt, slander or defamation, or promote gambling, racism, violence or terrorism, the question arises whether the Ministry of Communications and Information technology is violating articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution of India by issuing such a directive.

9. Please provide a photocopy of all the documents relating to the questions above, including but not limited to:

- a. The directive issued by the concerned Ministry to Internet Service Providers
 - b. The list of all the specific domain names that have been blocked
 - c. The Act under which the Government of India is empowered to block domain names in India.
- I must emphasize here that these websites are used by thousands of ordinary Indian citizens to express their views, thoughts and ideas. Indian Citizens have the right to express their views freely, and to have an unhindered exchange of thoughts and ideas. Blocking these websites universally and not allowing Indian Citizens to read any of them is tantamount to hindering the freedom of expression of thousands of ordinary Indian citizens. I request you to kindly look into this matter. Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

<Name Here>

<Address Here>

[Courtesy: Mr. Shivam.Vij, Journalist, Tehelka]

List of information requested by _____ under RTI ACT 2005. Application dated _____ pertaining to his file no. _____ and year _____ for issue/renewal of passport.

1. Please inform me about/Please furnish me with the daily progress made on my application till date of your reply.
2. Names, designations and office addresses of the officials with whom my application was lying during this period, and date wise period with each official and action taken by him/her.
3. Please give evidence of receipt and dispatch of my application in the office of each of these officials.
4. Please inform me, according to your rules or citizens' charter or any other order, the number of days in which such a matter should have been dealt with and resolved. Please also provide a copy of these rules.
5. As the officials have not adhered to the time limit mentioned in the rules and are guilty of violating these rules, please give a copy of their conduct rules and details of action taken by the RPO against erring officials.
6. In case no action has been initiated for dereliction of duties against erring officials, the reasons be made known to me.
7. Please inform me the name of the police station/dept. to whom application was referred for police verification with outward number, date of dispatch and date when reply was received by you. Photocopy of letter addressed to police for verification and proof of mailing be submitted to me.
8. Please let me know when I am likely to receive my passport.
9. Please inform me of the days taken by your office in issuing/renewing passports in last 25 applications, excluding days required for police verification.
10. Please inform me of the number of complaints for delay in issuing/renewing passports that were received against your office in last one year or last financial year.

Signature of Applicant

As can be seen from both the examples, the writer must begin by stating the purpose of drafting the letter.

I. She/He must state the kind of information required and the subject of the letter in simple and clear terms.

For example:

i) To enquire about my Provident Fund Application.

ii) RTI query about the Admission Procedure to 11th Std.

II. This should be followed by specific questions / queries so that, when these queries are answered, a detailed picture emerges. There is no standard format in which these letters should

be written. The applicant can follow the routine business letter format if s/he so desires. However, if s/he follows the small query format s/he is likely to get precise and clear information. Besides, this is a simpler method of taking up a specific issue.

For example:

I would like to use the RTI Act to know about my provident fund application/ pension file/ submission of my application for Mhada flats.

1. What is the current status of my application/ file?
2. Who is the officer-in-charge who is handling this division/ these cases?
3. What is the serial number of my application?
4. What is the procedure followed?
5. Please tell me the total number of applications received by the concerned authority on.....
6. How many of these applications have been processed as on.....
7. What is the criterion for selection?
8. When will I be informed of my selection/rejection?

▪ **Appeals:**

In case the applicant fails to receive information within a stipulated period, or he is not happy with the decision he has received, he can appeal to the higher authority. The appeal has to be filed within 30 days of the receipt of the first decision. The photocopy of the response received from the previous authority must be attached. If the applicant is not satisfied with the response, s/he can subsequently go for a second appeal, which has to be made within 90 days from the receipt of the judgment of the first appeal.