

A letter of complaint

Reading comprehension

Read the text carefully and think about the questions below.

How does the writer feel about her holidays? What does she want to compensate for the bad service?

Dear Sir/Madam,

My family and **I** have just returned from one of your 'weekend breaks' in Paris (April 23-26) and I am writing to express my strong dissatisfaction at the holiday we were given.

To begin with, the hotel was not at all as we had been led to expect from your brochure. **As** the bar was open to non-residents, the foyer was permanently noisy and dirty. In fact, the noise from the disco was so bad that getting to sleep before 2 am on any night was virtually impossible. The bedrooms, too, were not up to standard: in our room, the walls were damp, the basin was cracked and the windows were caked with grime and did not open. As for my daughter's bedroom, the heating did not work, and the bed had not been changed since the last occupant.

Added to all **this**, the fully trained and experienced courier that we had been promised turned out to be a university student on a vacation job. Mr Johnson's hold on the French language was, to say the least, tenuous and one of our party had to step in and act as interpreter on many occasions. Not only did Mr Johnson have problems on this score but he was obviously totally unfamiliar with our route. This was evident on the second day when he turned up, late, for our coach trip around the capital, examining a large map. **When** we got going, **it** became clear that he was having great difficulty in following this map and we **consequently** spent much of our day kneeling on our seats peering out of the back window of the coach at the places we had just missed!

As you will realise, we are thoroughly disgusted with the holiday that your company provided. I trust **you** will agree that at the very least we deserve a letter of explanation from you and a substantial refund of our money. Unless this is forthcoming, we shall have to take matters a step further.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Randolph Clark

Focus on discourse

Re-read the text and answer these questions:

- a) What genre does the text belong to?
- b) Who has written the text?
- c) Why has the author written it?
- d) Who is going to read the text? Does the author know this person at all?
- e) What register has the author used: formal, semi-formal or informal? How can you tell?
- f) How does the text begin and end? Account
- g) What tone has the author used: friendly and personal or controlled and detached?

Focus on cohesion

Who or what do the following words refer to? What type of word are they?

In the case of conjunctions, explain what the connectors express and provide a synonym.

Example:

- *This was evident on the second day when **he** turned up, late, for our coach trip around the capital, examining a large map.*

Analysis: Anaphoric reference. It's a personal pronoun. It refers (back) to Mr. Johnson.

- ***When** we got going, it became clear that he was having great difficulty in following this map and we consequently spent much of our day kneeling on our seats peering out of the back window of the coach at the places we had 30 just missed!*

Analysis: It is a time connective (or conjunction). You could paraphrase it/re-write it in this way: As soon as we got going/ the moment we got going, it became clear that he was...

- a) As
- b) This
- c) It
- d) You
- e) Consequently

Focus on grammar

1. Identify the verb tense in the sentences removed from the text above. Then, explain the use of the verb tenses in each case.
 - a) My family and I have just returned from one of your 'weekend breaks' in Paris.
 - b) ... the bed had not been changed since the last is occupant .
 - c) ... he was having great difficulty in following this map.

2. Pay attention to the modal verb *will* in the last paragraph and account for its use. Use this guide to answer:
 - What does this modal verb express according to Alexander (*Longman English Grammar*)?
 - The modal verb is used twice in this last paragraph. State whether its use corresponds to the primary, secondary function, or both.
 - Rewrite the sentence avoiding the use of the modal verb; this will help you understand the message.

3. Identify the passive voice in the following sentence removed from the text and account for its use considering both the reference material and the context.

Use the questions below as a guide to answer.

- What syntactic clues (structure; word order) help you identify the passive voice?
- Is the doer of the action (agent) mentioned?
- Is it known by the writer? Is it unknown? Is it taken for granted because it is assumed both the writer and the reader know the agent?

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