



How to Write a Demand Letter

Introduction

Someone owes you money. You bought something that does not work. A service provider did not perform the promised work. If you disagree with an individual or a company, and informal efforts to resolve your dispute fail, you should write a demand letter. It may help persuade the other person to give you what you want.

Before you start writing the letter, think about your relationship with the person who owes the money. Is it a friend or relative? Is it important to keep a good personal relationship with that person? Is it a contractor, business, or person with whom you may have future interaction? This will help determine the letter's tone. You must draft the demand letter with as little emotion as possible. And-- stick to the facts.

Keep a detailed record and copies of all your communications with the other person or company. Write down the date, time, name of the person you spoke to, and the nature of all your conversations about the problem. Keep a copy of all contracts, bills, invoices, correspondence, statements, and so on.

How do I write and send a demand letter?

- **Type your letter.** If you do not have a computer, try to get access to one. You could ask a friend with a computer or check your local public library. Libraries often have computers you can use for free or a small charge, even during the COVID-19 pandemic when they print for you.
- **Concisely review the main facts.** State detailed facts in the order they happened.

- **Be polite.** Do not personally attack the other party. The more you attack, the more you invite the other side to respond in a similar tone. This reduces your chances of resolving the dispute.
- **Write with your goal in mind.** The letter should encourage the other party to make a businesslike analysis of the dispute and think about questions such as:
 - What are my risks of losing?
 - How much time will a defense take?
 - Do I want the dispute to be decided in public?
- **Ask for exactly what you want.** For example, if you want \$2,000, do not beat around the bush. Ask for it. Explain how you arrived at this amount.
- **Set a deadline.** Give the other party a specific date to respond to your letter. Seven to ten days is typical.
- **End the letter by stating you will promptly pursue legal remedies if the other party does not meet your demand.**
- **Make and keep copies.** Make a copy of each letter before sending it.
- **Send your letter by regular and certified mail with a return receipt requested.** Send it also by regular mail with tracking/delivery confirmation in case the recipient refuses to sign the receipt. Keep a copy of all post office receipts.

If you end up in small claims court, you can use the return receipt and proof of delivery to counter any claim that the other party did not receive the demand letter.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

© 2021 Northwest Justice Project — 1-888-201-1014.

(Permission for copying and distribution granted to the Alliance for Equal Justice and to individuals for non-commercial purposes only.)

Sample Demand Letters

Below are sample letters you might write an auto repair shop for doing a shoddy repair job and a contractor who botched a remodeling contract.

Car Repair

June 16, 2020

Tucker's Fix-It-Quick Garage
999 Main Street
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Tucker,

On May 21, 2020, I took my car to your garage for servicing. Shortly after picking it up the next day, the engine caught fire because you did not properly connect the fuel line to the fuel injector. Fortunately, I was able to douse the fire without injury. As a direct result of the engine fire, I paid the ABC garage \$1,281 for necessary repair work. I enclose a copy of their invoice and my receipt.

In addition, I was without the use of my car for three days and had to rent a car to get to work. I enclose a copy of my receipt showing the rental cost of \$145.

In a recent phone conversation, you claimed that the fire was not the result of your negligence and would have happened anyway. You also said that even if it was your fault, I should have brought my car back to your garage so you could have fixed it for less.

First, Peter Klein of the ABC Garage is prepared to testify in court that the fire occurred because the fuel line was not properly connected to the fuel injector, the exact part of the car you were working on. Second, I had no obligation to return the car to you for more repairs. I had the damage you caused repaired at a commercially reasonable price and am prepared to prove this by presenting several higher estimates by other garages.

Please send me a check or money order for \$1,426 by July 15. If I do not receive payment by that date, I will promptly file this case in small claims court. Assuming I receive a judgment, which will be part of the public record available to credit agencies, I will promptly follow all legal avenues to collect it. You may reach me during the day at 555-555-2857 or in the evenings until 10 p.m. at 555-555-8967.

Sincerely,

Sherrell Chapman
9876 High St., Seattle, WA 98111
555-987-6543
Email address

Home Contractor

June 20, 2020

Beyond Repair Construction
10 1st Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Sirs:

You recently did replacement tile work and other remodeling on my downstairs bathroom at 142 West Pine Street, here in Seattle. As per our written agreement, I paid you \$4,175 upon completion of the job on May 17, 2020. Only two weeks later, on June 1, I noticed that the tile in the north portion of the shower had sunk almost half an inch, with the result that our shower floor was uneven and water pooled in the downhill corner before eventually going down the drain. In our phone conversations, you claimed that the problem was in my imagination, was my fault, and was too minor to deal with.

I paid for a first-class remodeling job, and I expect to receive it. Please contact me within ten days to arrange to pay me \$1,200 (the cost of redoing the work per the enclosed estimate from ABC Tile) or to arrange to redo the work yourself. If I do not hear from you by July 15, 2020 I will promptly file in small claims court.

Sincerely,

Ben Garcia
1234 Main St.
Seattle, WA 98101
555-123-4567
Email address