

Making a complaint at work

Think before you act! Ask yourself what you want to achieve before you make a grievance.

Some employers can take umbrage at your having the temerity to complain, mark you down as unsuitable for promotion and mentally make a note to comment adversely on your reference when you go. Others might be genuinely unaware of the existence or effect of whatever is bothering you and be grateful to you for alerting them to a potential problem

You have to decide how to pitch your complaint according to the nature of your employer and your own agenda.

If you merely want to place on record your concerns for yourself, because you are not working to full capacity because of the problem, write a letter stating the facts without emotion. Ask that it be placed on your personnel file. This should help protect you against possible future accusations.

If you want to place on record your concerns for the business, because it is not working to full capacity because of the problem, consider speaking to your line manager. Stress how “we” could be losing customers or good staff, because of the problem and if you can think of a solution, volunteer it. Be prepared to have him ignore you or indeed, adopt it and take it up the line as if it were his own idea!

If you want to work your way towards resigning then claiming unfair constructive dismissal, lodge a formal grievance, state that it is such, stress how much it is affecting you physically, mentally or both. Ask to be told what remedial action is proposed and the timetable. Be ready to resign, if there is no satisfactory outcome and to suffer the time expense and stress in seeking compensation.

Most problems at work have a legal remedy, although this is often not the route that you want to go down. The statutory grievance procedure is designed to have the employer face up to problems and deal with them in the same way as the statutory disciplinary procedure is designed to encourage employees to perform better.

In a larger, perhaps rather formal, company, you might need to operate the formal procedure. In a smaller, perhaps friendlier, company, a word with the boss might be enough.