

Legal issues

Unit 2

Making a complaint in prison



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Legal issues: Unit 2 Making complaints in prison

This unit is designed to help learners use polite language to ask for help and make complaints in prison. They will also hear typical answers to respond to. While not covering specific legal vocabulary, it should assist learners to express their opinions, understand and exercise their rights.

Level: Entry level 1-3/ Scottish Access 2 - Intermediate 1/ CEFR A1 - B1

Time: Approximately 110 minutes. Timings are flexible and teachers can break down the units into smaller chunks of learning and build in revision as required.

Aims

- to understand and make complaints in prison

Objectives

All learners will be able to:

- listen to a complaint by a prisoner and answer questions about it
- read about the complaints procedure and answer a few questions
- role-play a complaint to a prison officer or person in authority
- use a few polite expressions

Entry 3 learners will be able to:

- explain the complaints procedure and what to do if the problem is not resolved
- role-play a complaint of more detailed problem.

Preparation

You will need:

- **Resource 1:** one copy for each learner
- **Resource 2a:** one copy for each Entry 1 learner (2a is a simplified version for Entry 1 learners)
- **Resource 2b:** one copy for each Entry 1 learner (2b is a longer text for Entry 2 and 3 learners)
- **Resource 3:** one copy for each learner
- **Resource 4:** print the role play slips and cut them up in to strips (there are some for Entry 1 learners and some for Entry 2 and 3 learners so print enough pages for the different learners)
- Transcript: **Good complaint** – copies for learners for extension activity
- **Audio 1: Bad complaint** and **Audio 2: Good complaint**
- Elementary learner dictionaries

Procedure

Warmer (5 minutes)

- Ask the learners, '*What do you do when you have a problem in prison?*' and ask them to

discuss in groups. You may need to give them an example, such as: *'Imagine you order something but it doesn't arrive. What do you do?'*

- Write *complain* on the board and check that learners understand what the word means. Point out that we 'make a complaint'.
- Then ask the learners, *'Have you ever complained in prison?'* *'What about?'*
- If learners haven't complained about anything, ask them if there is anything they want to complain about at the moment.
- Do not elicit too many problems at this stage. Give each learner a small piece of paper and ask them to write (or draw) the issue on the paper and then to fold the paper in half and pass it to you. You will use these pieces of paper later.

Differentiation

If you know your class well, use their own problems. However, if you are not sure or think the lesson could become too negative provide them with a few light-hearted examples and ask them what they would do. For example, *the gym is too small; there is no TV in his cell; he wants to drink beer in his cell but he's not allowed.*

Activity 1 – Preparing to speak to how to approach someone in authority (15 minutes)

- Ask learners who to speak to when you want to complain about something in prison. Encourage learners to share ideas. Elicit or supply the answer: *'speak to the prison officer in person'*.
- Elicit a simple complaints dialogue from the learners. To do this, sketch a prison officer standing next to a prisoner on the board (stick drawings will be fine). Make it clear who is who, perhaps by giving a name to each person and writing it above the drawing. Add a speech bubble for both characters.
- Elicit language such as: *'Excuse me ...'*, *'May/ Can I have a word with you?'* or *'May/ Can I talk to you about something?'*
- Drill these phrases as whole group then half the group then individuals and in pairs.
- Write the prisoner's words in the speech bubble.

Activity 2 – Listening to a complaint in prison: audio 1 (15 minutes)

- Play audio 1 (a bad example of a complaint). Ask the learners how the prisoner feels when complaining: *the prisoner is angry.*
- Put learners in groups according to level. Hand out **resource 1** and read through the questions with the learners.
- Play audio 1 for a second time. Put learners in pairs to answer the questions.
- After allowing time for the learners to complete the task, invite comments from a variety of learners e.g. *'Why is this a bad way to complain'*.

Differentiation

Low level learners: once the higher level learners understand the task, work with them to read the questions from **resource 1** task 1.

Activity 3 – Listening to a complaint in prison: audio 2 (15 minutes)

- Ask learners to listen to audio 2 and ask *'What's the difference between this and the previous version?'* (a good example of a complaint).



- Elicit the meaning of post then ask the learners to complete Task 2 of Resource 1.
- Review the answers as a class.
- Focus on Task 3 and use statement 1 as an example. Learners need to read the statements and write who they think said each statement. Make sure learners understand what a complaints form is.
- Play audio 2 again for learners to check.

Differentiation/ extension

- Low level learners: play audio 2 as many times as the learners need.
- For E2/ 3 learners: elicit meaning of expressions such as '*to read someone's mind*' means.
- Learners could practise the dialogue using the transcript of audio 2. First get them to listen again and repeat. Next ask them to work in pairs then swap roles and repeat.

Activity 4 – Reading: the complaints procedure (15 minutes)

- Before you hand out **resource 2a** and **2b**, elicit the meaning of *procedure*.
- Tell learners they are going to read and discuss the procedure for complaining in prison.
- Before handing out the text, ask learners if they can guess what the procedure is. Tell them to think of a few stages. You could write numbers 1 to 4 on the board to encourage of think of up to four stages.
- Group learners according to level then hand out **resource 2a** and **2b** (2a is a simplified version for Entry 1 learners; 2b is a longer text for Entry 2 and 3 learners). Learners need to read the text and then complete the tasks.
- Elicit the procedure from the learners. In Resource 2b, the text does not define the word 'discrimination'. Encourage learners to use a dictionary to find out what the word means.

Differentiation/ extension

- Low level learners: once the higher level learners understand the task, work with the very lowest level group to support them to do the activity.
- Elicit what to do if the written complaint doesn't work.

Activity 5 – Language to complain (20 minutes)

- Give **resource 3** to all learners. In Task 1, ask learners to put the words in to the correct order.
- After learners have done Task 1, ask them to compare with a partner.
- Focus on Task 2 and invite learners to put the expressions from Task 1 in to the dialogue.
- If necessary, play audio 2 again for learners to check their answers.
- Practise the dialogue by acting it out with the group. You could invite a volunteer to come to the front and practise making the complaint using the sentences in the dialogue. Depending on your group, you could be the prison officer or you could invite a learner to play the role.

Differentiation/ extension

Low level learners: concentrate on Task 1. Once the higher level learners are doing the task, work with them to complete. Then take the role of the prison officer and get learners to ask for help.

Activity 6 – Speaking: role play (15 minutes)

- Group learners according to level then give each learner a role play slip. Each learner will take turns to complain about something to another learner.
- Give each learner time to read his role and plan what he wants to say. Encourage all learners to be polite and encourage them to use the expressions from audio 2.
- Pair learners with someone they are happy to work with. Ask them to make their complaint and for the other learner to listen and tell them to take a complaints form.

Differentiation

- The role play slips have been separated according to level. Give the simple ones to Entry 1 learners and the more detailed ones to Entry 3 learners. You may need to support E1 and lower level learners.
- For early finishers, give them another role play slip to practise talking about a different problem.

Cooler (10 minutes)

- Hand back the pieces of paper with complaints that the learners wrote down in the warmer task.
- Ask learners to prepare how to complain about the problem on the slip of paper. Encourage them to use the language they have practised.
- If learners are comfortable, put them in pairs to role play their complaints. If they do not want to do that, you can play the prison officer role and they can practise complaining to you.
- Ask the other learners to observe and give polite feedback. Do they think the learner was polite? Were there any grammar mistakes? Could they do it differently?

Extension activities

- You could spend more time helping learners prepare to make their complaints. If you feel that your learners would like to role-play their complaints, allow time in a follow-up lesson.
- You could get complaints form for learners or ask learners to obtain one from their wing. There are several activities they could do with this: 1) using the roles, interview each other and fill in the form with their partners complaint 2) fill in the form with some mistakes and ask the learners to identify them 3) ask learners to fill in the form with their own issues.
- Learners could write a letter to their MP, NOMs or Inside Time (see **Inside Time** lesson plan for more help)

Resource 1

Task 1: Listen to audio 1. Then answer the questions.

1. Why is the prisoner complaining?

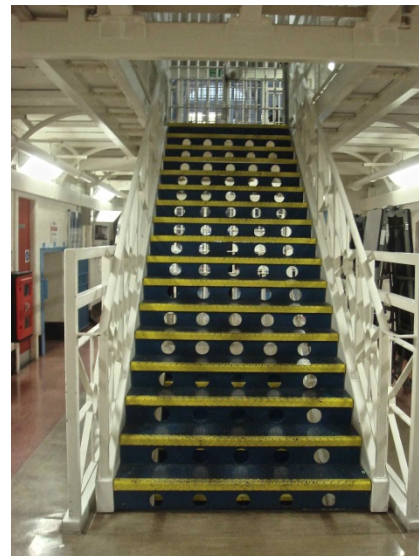
.....
.....

2. How does the prisoner feel? Is he happy?

.....
.....

3. What does the prison officer say?

.....
.....



Task 2: Listen to audio 2. Then answer the questions.

1. Why is this conversation better?

.....
.....

2. What does the prison officer say?

.....
.....



Task 3: Who says what? Write P for prisoner; PO for Prison officer

1. Excuse me. Can I have a word please? P
2. I have a complaint.
3. Go on. I can't read your mind.
4. My family sent me something in the post but it still hasn't arrived.
5. What is it you're waiting for?
6. And how long have you been waiting?
7. Have you filled in a complaints form?
8. Thanks for your help.

Listen and check.

Resource 2a – Reading about the complaints procedure

Task 1: Read the box and answer the questions.

1. Who do you speak to when you want to complain?

.....

2. What can you do if you still have the problem?

.....

3. What do you do with the complaints form?

.....

The prison complaints procedure

If you have a complaint, you need to do these things:

- Talk to a prison officer or member of staff. Tell the officer about the problem.
- If this does not work, fill in a complaints form. Take a form from your wing.
- Make a copy of your complaint.
- Post the form into a complaints box.

Task 2

Ask someone in your class:

- Where can you find a complaints form?
- Where is the complaints box?

Text adapted from: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

Resource 2b – Reading about the complaints procedure

Read the about the procedure of making a complaint in prison and then do **Task 1**.

The prison complaints procedure

If you have a complaint, you need to do these things:

- First, talk to a prison officer or member of staff.
- If this does not fix the problem, make a written complaint. You must do this quickly, within three months from the date when you first had the problem. To complain in writing, you need to fill in a complaints form. You can get these forms in every wing.
- If you want to complain about discrimination, you will need to fill out a Discrimination Incident Reporting Form (DIRF).
- Make a copy of your complaint.
- Post the form into a complaints box found on most landings and in other parts of the prison.
- If you are still not happy, you can appeal to a more senior member of staff.
- The final option is to complain to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO), which investigates complaints. The PPO is independent to the prison.

Task 1: Put these statements in order from 1 – 4.

- complain to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
- 1 speak to a prison officer about your problem
- speak to another member of staff, with more authority
- fill in a complaints form and hand it in

Task 2: Think about these questions

What is discrimination? What can you do if you experience discrimination?

What does the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman do?

Ask your teacher if you don't know the answers.

Text adapted from: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

Resource 3 – Making a complaint

Task 1: Put the words in order to make sentences or questions

Example: me excuse

Excuse me.

1. help for thanks your

.....

2. haven't / no / I

.....

3. sent / something / my / family / me

.....

4. a / I / complaint / have

.....

5. I / word / have / please / a / can /

.....?

Task 2: Write the sentences or questions from Activity 1 in to the conversation

Prisoner: *Excuse me.* a)

Prison officer: Yes, what is it?

Prisoner: b)

Prison officer: Go on. I can't read your mind.

Prisoner: c)in the post but it still hasn't arrived.

Prison officer: What is it you are waiting for?

Prisoner: Some books.

Prison officer: And how long have you been waiting?

Prisoner: They sent them a month ago.

Prison officer: OK. Have you filled in a complaints form?

Prisoner: d)

Prison officer: I tell you what, take this form and fill it in. Then bring it back when it's done.

Prisoner: e)

Task 3: Practise this conversation with a partner



Resource 4 - Role-play slips

You have a problem with the library. There are no books in your language in the prison library. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem with the showers. The water is cold. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem with your cell. You don't have pillow in your cell. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem. You want to spend more time in the exercise yard. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem. There is no toilet paper in the toilet. Tell a prison officer so that he can help.



Problems that require more language

You have a problem. There is no soap so you can't wash your hands. You ordered some soap in your last order but it hasn't come yet. The order should have arrived a week ago. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem. The last two times you visited the prayer room, it was locked. You need to go to the prayer room because it is too noisy and busy in your cell. This is very important to you. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem. You need to fill in a discrimination form. There is not a form in your language. Complain to the prison officer.



You have a problem with the food in the canteen. You do not like the food because you think it is not healthy and is making you feel ill. Complain to the prison officer.



Transcript for audio 1 – Bad complaint

Prisoner: Look mate! I'm really angry and I hate this prison.

Prison officer: Calm down! Being angry is not going to help you. What's wrong?

Prisoner: Someone is stealing my things! It's just not fair.

Prison officer: OK, what is it you are missing?

Prisoner: My family sent me some stuff and it hasn't arrived! I want to know who has taken it? Get me a solicitor now!

Prison officer: Please calm down.

Transcript for audio 2 – Good complaint

Prisoner: Excuse me. Can I have a word please?

Prison officer: Yes, what is it?

Prisoner: I have a complaint.

Prison officer: Go on. I can't read your mind.

Prisoner: My family sent me something in the post but it still hasn't arrived.

Prison officer: What is it you are waiting for?

Prisoner: Some books.

Prison officer: And how long have you been waiting?

Prisoner: They sent them a month ago.

Prison officer: OK. Have you filled in a complaints form?

Prisoner: No, I haven't.

Prison officer: I tell you what, take this form and fill it in. Then bring it back when it's done.

Prisoner: Thanks for your help.

Answers

Resource 1

Task 1

1. The prisoner is complaining because he is waiting for something from his family, which has not arrived yet.
2. The prisoner feels angry. He is not happy.
3. The prison officer tells him to 'calm down'.

Task 2:

1. This conversation is better because the prisoner is polite and controls his feelings.
2. He tells the prisoner to fill in a complaints form.

Task 3:

1. P
2. P
3. PO
4. P
5. PO
6. PO
7. PO
8. P

Resource 2a

Task 1

1. a prison officer or member of staff
2. fill in a complaints form
3. make a copy and post it into a complaints box

Task 2

The answers will vary according to prison.

Resource 2b

Task 1

The order of the statements should be:

- 1 speak to a prison officer about your problem
- 2 fill in a complaints form and hand it in
- 3 speak to another member of staff, with more authority
- 4 complain to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

Task 2

Discrimination is when someone is treated differently (unfairly) because of their age, sex, race, religion etc.

If you experience discrimination in prison you can fill in a Discrimination Incident Reporting Form (DIRF).

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman makes independent investigation into complaints. You can obtain more information on the official website <http://www.ppo.gov.uk/>.

Resource 3

Task 1:

1. Thanks for your help.
2. No I haven't.
3. My family sent me something.
4. I have a complaint.
5. Can I have a word please?

Task 2:

- a) Can I have a word please?
- b) I have a complaint.
- c) My family sent me something
- d) No, I haven't.
- e) Thanks for your help.