

Are You An Effective Complainer?

Effective Complaining Quiz

[Adapted from Ombudsman Ontario's Community Education Resource Materials, 2005]

1. Are you prepared?

- a) I thought about the issue, did some research and came up with a plan.
- b) My style is just to do it – jump in feet first.
- c) Why should I prepare? They are the ones to blame and who need to work to fix my problem.

2. Can you briefly summarize your complaint?

- a) It's taken some work but I can clearly, concisely state my complaint.
- b) It's just too complicated to summarize briefly. I need to explain the context and the details of what really happened for someone to understand.
- c) Why should I cater to them? They created this mess; they'd better be prepared to just listen.

3. How have you backed up your complaint?

- a) Through collecting evidence and documentation.
- b) By relating the whole story and its details in an interesting, entertaining way.
- c) By crying and showing how damaging the effect has been.

4. When you complain, would you describe yourself as:

- a) Cool, calm and collected.
- b) Anxious, confused and uncertain.
- c) Tough and demanding, sometimes just losing it; swearing, shouting, insulting.

5. Do you ask questions and listen when you complain?

- a) I prepare questions in advance and work at listening even if it is challenging.
- b) I don't know; if a question comes to mind I'll ask it.
- c) Why should I? They should be listening to me and asking how they can fix it!

6. Are you complaining to the right person or organization?

- a) Part of my research was finding out the complaint process and to whom I should take my complaint.
- b) It does not matter, they should help me anyway.
- c) I'll give whomever an earful, who cares?

7. What role does your anger play in your complaining process?

- a) Processing my anger through writing and talking to friends energizes and motivates me, and allows me to let go/detach when I'm officially complaining.

- b) I'm aware my anger is sometimes difficult to control because the complaining process is so frustrating.
- c) Expressing the full extent of my anger makes people take notice and do something.

8. When you complain, do you have support?

- a) I ask my friends for advice or support. Sometimes I've found university resources that are also supportive to my complaint process.
- b) No, I don't need help. I know what I'm doing and want to get on with it.
- c) Complaining is easy, just vent. I don't need support for that.

9. Do you know what you want to achieve by complaining?

- a) I have specific expectations but might be willing to compromise.
- b) I don't know – nobody ever asked me what I want.
- c) Who cares if my demands are reasonable or not? I want action!

10. Can you describe your process?

- a) Complaining can be complicated so I am keeping a record of all my calls, letters and responses, including the names and positions of people I have spoken to.
- b) I'm frustrated at getting passed from one person to another and from one department to another. When I call back, the whole process starts again. Who can keep track?
- c) When the phone gets answered, I start yelling. I demand immediate action or else. A few threats never hurt anybody.

Rate Yourself

Count up how many times you answered A, B and C.

A_____ B_____ C_____

- A: 10-7 Excellent complainer. You are likely making changes for the better.
- B: 7-4 On the right track. Increased organization and self-awareness will make you an effective complainer.
- C: Over 3 You have a lot to learn. You may make things worse for yourself, not better! Ask for support and review effective complaining techniques.