

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
**consumer information center**

1625 North Market Blvd., Suite N-112  
Sacramento, CA 95834  
800.952.5210  
www.dca.ca.gov | dca@dca.ca.gov

# YOUR VOICE IS POWERFUL!

learn what you can do  
to resolve complaints

## self-help for consumers

The best way to protect yourself from fraud, scams, or problems is to be aware of potential pitfalls ahead of time. If that isn't enough, you should also know what you can do to resolve complaints. Here are some tips for both:

### before you buy

- \* Make sure any professional you hire has the required license:
  - 1 For professionals licensed by the Department on Consumer Affairs (health care providers, accountants, security guards, cosmetologists, auto repair shops, contractors, and more), visit [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov) or call 800.952.5210.
  - 2 For other types of California professional licenses, visit [www.consumerservices.ca.gov](http://www.consumerservices.ca.gov). Click the "license verification" tab.
- \* Get a written copy of guarantees and warranties.
- \* Ask about the refund, return, and exchange policy.
- \* Don't sign any contract or legal document until you read and understand it. Insist that any extras you are promised are put in writing.

### after you buy

- \* Save the paperwork: contracts, sales receipts, cancelled checks, owner's manuals, warranty documents, etc.
- \* Be sure to follow the service and use instructions in the owner's manual. The way you use or take care of a product could affect your warranty.

**TAKE  
CHARGE**  
CALIFORNIA

dca



## solving a problem

- \* Check with your credit card company. You may have the right to withhold payment if the product or service is unsatisfactory.
- \* Complain as soon as possible. A letter to the manager of the business that sold the product or performed the service is usually effective. Keep copies of all correspondence.

## filing a complaint

If a letter to the manager does not resolve the problem, you may want to file a complaint with the following:

- \* Department of Consumer Affairs. File a complaint online at [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov) or call 800.952.5210 to have a complaint form mailed to you.
- \* California Attorney General's Office. File a complaint online at [www.ag.ca.gov](http://www.ag.ca.gov).
- \* The Better Business Bureau. Go to [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org), or consult your phone directory for a local office.
- \* The District Attorney's Office in your county. Consult your phone directory under "county offices."

## other options

A neutral third party may be able to help resolve a dispute between a consumer and a business. For more information about complaint resolution services, visit [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov) or call 800.952.5210.

## small claims court

If other attempts to resolve your dispute have failed, you may be able to file a claim in Small Claims Court. Consult DCA's publication *The Small Claims Court: A Guide to Its Practical Use*. Find it online at [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov), or call 800.952.5210 to have a printed copy mailed to you.

The online California Courts Self-Help Center, sponsored by the Judicial Council, also has information on Small Claims Courts at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp).

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## sample complaint letter

Date  
Your name  
Your address  
City, state, zip code  
Your phone number  
Name and title of contact person  
Company name  
Mailing address  
City, state, zip code

Dear (contact person),

On (date), I (purchased, leased, rented, or had repaired) a (name of the product, serial or model number or service performed) at (location, date, and other important details of the transaction).

Unfortunately, your product (or service) has not performed well (or the service was inadequate) because (state the problem). I am disappointed because (explain the problem; for example, the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented, etc.).

To resolve the problem, I would appreciate (state the specific action you want—money back, credit on bank card, exchange, etc.).

I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem. I will wait until (set a time limit) before seeking help from a consumer protection agency or the Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the address or phone number shown above.

Sincerely,

(Your signature and printed name)

