Adjustment Letter

Adjustment letters are created to satisfy someone who has lodged a complaint against your company, and they are generated for various types of audiences: an unsatisfied client, unhappy employee, or a discontented supplier. Most adjustment letters are written in response to a claim filed against the company, but some are generated as a result of an internal discovery netting information about a faulty product or negligent service.

1. **Purpose:** Your letter should do the following:
   A. Apologize.
   B. Offer some type of conciliation—partial or full reimbursement, depending upon your company’s policy.
   C. Restore good will.

2. **Tone and Style:** Because of the delicate nature of adjustment letters, the tone and style should maintain professionalism, project intimacy, and accept responsibility without blaming the client.
   A. You will write in first person, using “I” or “we.”
      I. Using first person singular provides a more intimate connection between the writer and the audience.
      II. Using first person plural represents the entire company.
   B. Avoid passive voice. When you write something like “a mistake was made,” you fail to take responsibility. Instead, write, “We mistakenly entered 1,000 instead of 10,000.”
   C. Avoid assigning blame, or using words such as “faulty” or “defective.”
   D. You will project the “you viewpoint.” Instead of writing, “We must receive the sales receipt before we can offer you a refund,” you should write, “So that you can receive your refund as quickly as possible, please mail or fax your receipt.”
   E. Avoid over-using the pronoun “you.”
   F. Be specific—avoid using too many adjectives or adverbs.
   G. Avoid stringing too many clauses or phrases together—if you have a sentence with many clauses or phrases, consider bulleting.
   H. Avoid clichés, euphemisms, slang, or heavy jargon.
   I. Avoid stating the obvious—if you are writing to tell someone about an error, you do not have to say, “We were examining your files and found an error.”
   J. Avoid filler language.
   K. Avoid unnecessary prepositional phrases.

3. **Format:** The letter should follow the official business letter formatting. **(Refer to the Formatting a Business Letter resource.)** On the subject line, you should state the problem briefly and clearly.

4. **Content:** In your adjustment letter, you should do the following:
   A. Acknowledge and describe the error.
   B. Accept responsibility and describe the plan for compensation.
C. Give instructions for returning merchandise, correcting an error, and/or receiving compensation.

5. **Components:** (Three paragraphs)
   
   A. Paragraph one:
      
      I. After the salutation, introduce yourself and immediately follow with an apology or a regret statement. Your apology should include the reason for the letter. Always address your reader respectfully.
      
      II. Describe the error using the pronoun “we.” Remember, the client has a relationship with the company, not the individuals in it.
      
      III. After you acknowledge the problem, do not repeat it. Avoid using words like “faulty,” “error,” “negligence,” etc.

   B. Paragraph two:
      
      I. Specifically describe what must be done by the client and by the company.
      
      II. Graciously offer a concession and an explanation, or, if there is not a policy for the concession, explain why.
      
      III. Concisely describe a time frame for when your company’s obligation for repair will end. This is especially true if your company could incur penalties or interests.

   C. Paragraph three:
      
      I. Point out any steps that your company will take to prevent a reoccurrence.
      
      II. End the letter with goodwill.