

Write a demand letter

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

January 28, 2025

A demand letter is a letter you send to someone who owes you money, services or a product. You can also use a demand letter to ask someone to stop doing something they are doing to you. It's a way you can ask someone to complete the requirements of their agreement with you.

1. Fast facts

What is a demand letter?

A demand letter is a letter you send to someone who owes you money, services, or a product. It's a way you can ask someone to complete the requirements of their agreement with you. If you disagree with a person or a company, and informal efforts to resolve your dispute fail, you can write a demand letter. It may help persuade the other person to give you what you want.

You might need to send a demand letter if:

- You bought something that doesn't work, and the seller won't exchange the item or refund your money.
- A service provider didn't perform the promised work that you already paid for.
- You ordered a product that the seller never delivered.
- You're experiencing treatment from someone that you want to stop. You think that a demand letter could help stop the behavior. If you're afraid for your physical safety, you might want to try to get a protection order instead of using a demand letter to try to stop the behavior.

Who can I send a demand letter to?

You can send a demand letter to anyone who owes you something or who you want to do something based on an agreement you made. Before you start writing the letter, think about your relationship with the person you plan to send it to. Is it a friend, neighbor, community member, or relative? Is it important to keep a good personal relationship with them? Is it a contractor, business, or other entity who you may have to deal with in the future? This will help you decide if a letter is the right course of action.

What tone should a demand letter have?

You must write the demand letter with as little emotion as possible. Try to be neutral, clear and calm in tone. Stick to the facts about what you agreed to, what's owed, the timeline for the other person or entity to respond, and what they must do to fulfill their obligations.

Avoid emotions and opinions. Demand letters should focus only on facts. Don't make threats or use a threatening tone.

How do I get ready to write a demand letter?

Keep a detailed record and copies of all your communications with the other person or company. Write down the date, time, name of the person you spoke to, and the nature of all your conversations about the problem. Keep a copy of all contracts, bills, invoices, correspondence, statements, and so on. Print any emails or electronic communication you get about this issue. Make a folder where you keep everything related to this issue until it is resolved.

2. How to write demand letter

You can write your demand letter based on the example letters below.

1. Draft an outline of what happened

Focus only on facts. Make a short, numbered list of important facts. This list will be the main points of your letter. It is okay if it looks like a blocky list at

first. You will use the list to write a letter. The list can look like this:

1. Made contract with fence builder on August 13, 2024.
2. Contract was for ½ acre of dog fencing to be installed by October 13, 2024.
3. Contract was prepaid in full for \$2,500 by check, check number 1234567 dated August 13, 2024.
4. Check cleared August 20, 2024.
5. I contacted fence builder on these dates to follow up: 09/13, 09/30, 10/13, 10/31
6. The last time I heard from fence builder was 8/29.
7. Fence builder has only completed 1/3rd of the fencing.
8. Fence is not complete and not usable as is.
9. My goal is to get the fence finished or get 2/3rd of my money returned.

2. Draft your letter

Concisely review the main facts. State detailed facts in the order they happened. Use your list of facts and turn them into letter form. Use the style of a polite and formal letter. Don't personally attack the other party. The more you attack, the more you invite the other side to respond in a similar tone. This reduces your chances of resolving the dispute. Don't make threats. Limit the use of emotional language. Don't express opinions.

3. Be specific about who the letter is to

Address and direct the letter to the specific person you made the agreement with. If you're sending the letter to a business or company, you can name the manager responsible for the agreement with you. But then you should also list and name the company and department or team (if there is one). If you can't find the name of anyone at the company to direct the letter to, you can use just the company's name instead.

4. Make your demand

Write with your goal in mind. Ask for only what you believe you're owed. Be clear and direct. Ask for exactly what you want, don't ask for a general resolution that lacks a specific action or amount.

For example, if you want \$2,000, ask explicitly for \$2,000.
Explain how you arrived at this amount.

If you want a behavior to stop or an action to be finished, ask specifically for that behavior to stop or that job to be completed.

Your letter should encourage the other party to make a businesslike analysis of the dispute and think about such things as:

- What are my obligations to resolve this?
- What are my risks of losing?
- How much time will a defense take?
- Do I want the dispute to be decided in public?

5. Set deadlines

Give the other party a deadline for **both** responding to the letter **and** for resolution of the disagreement. A typical deadline for responding to a demand letter is 7 to 10 days. Also tell the other party the date by which you expect a final resolution of the matter. For example:

"I write to demand a refund of what I paid you to build me a dog fence. I demand completion of the fence by December 31, 2024. If the fence isn't completed by that date, I demand a full repayment of \$1,875, which is the amount I prepaid for the fence. I expect you to pay me the \$1,875 by January 15, 2025. Please respond to this letter within 10 days of today's date to let me know you received it and what your plan of action will be."

6. How to end the letter

End the letter by stating you'll promptly pursue legal remedies if the other party doesn't meet your demand. You should sign and date the letter and include your contact information and printed name. You should clearly tell the other party where and how to respond to you. For example:

“You can send your response to this letter to my PO Box at the address listed below. I expect to receive your reply within 2 weeks. If I don’t hear from you by then, I’ll be forced to pursue other legal remedies.”

3. After completing letter

1. Print your letter

If you don’t have a computer, try to get access to one. Demand letters are best when typed. They shouldn’t be handwritten if you can avoid it. You could ask a friend with a computer or check your local public library. Libraries often have computers you can use for free. There may be a small charge when they print the letter for you.

2. Make and keep copies

Make copies of your letter before sending it. Keep duplicate copies of your letter and any other correspondence related to the letter in the same place.

3. Send your letter with tracking and delivery confirmation

If you can, send your letter by certified mail with a return receipt requested. If you can’t send it certified, send it by regular mail with tracking and delivery confirmation in case the recipient refuses to sign the receipt. Keep a copy of all post office receipts and tracking information. Check the tracking information to confirm delivery and print any records you can see online that confirm the delivery.

If you end up having to go to small claims court, you can use the return receipt and proof of delivery to counter any claim that the

other party didn't get your demand letter.

4. Wait for a response and follow up

Give the other party the full amount of time to respond that you gave in your demand letter. Once that deadline has passed, it can be helpful to try to contact the other party at least once to try to follow up on the demand letter.

5. Decide what to do after the demand letter

If the first demand letter doesn't resolve your problem, here are **some options for next steps**:

- Send a second demand letter – this might be your best option
- Try to send a demand letter to a different person at the company
- Try to send a demand letter to the head of the company or business
- Try other means of communication to follow up, like email or phone calls
- File a small claims suit in local court about the issue
- Try to get legal help from a lawyer about what to do
- Try to use mediation or dispute resolution services to resolve the issue

4. Example letters

One is what you might write an auto repair shop for doing a shoddy repair job. The other is a demand letter you might send to a contractor who botched a remodeling contract.

Car repair demand letter

June 16, 2024

Tucker's Fix-It-Quick Garage
999 Main Street
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Tucker,

On May 21, 2024, I took my car to your garage for repair work on my fuel injectors. Shortly after picking it up the next day, the engine caught fire because you didn't properly connect the fuel line to the fuel injector after you finished making repairs. Fortunately, I was able to put out the fire without injury. As a direct result of the engine fire, I paid the ABC garage \$3,281 for necessary fire diagnostic and repair work. I included a copy of their invoice and my receipt with this letter.

Also as a direct result of the engine fire, I was without the use of my car for three days and had to rent a car to get to work. I included a copy of my receipt showing the rental cost of \$245.

I called you on May 25 to discuss what happened and ask you to repay me for the damage you caused. During that phone call, you claimed that the fire was not the result of your negligence and would have happened anyway. You also said that even if it was your fault, I should have brought my car back to your garage so you could have fixed it for less.

First, Peter Klein of the ABC Garage is prepared to testify in court that the fire occurred because the fuel line was not properly connected to the fuel injector, the exact part of the car you were working on. Second, I had no obligation to return the car to you for more repairs. I had the damage you caused repaired at a commercially reasonable price and am prepared to prove this by presenting several higher estimates by other garages.

Please send me a check or money order for \$3,526 by July 15. If I don't receive payment by that date, I will promptly file this case in small claims court. Assuming I receive a judgment, which will be part of the public record available to credit agencies, I will promptly follow all legal avenues to collect it. You may reach me during the day at 555-555-2857 or in the evenings until 9 p.m. at 555-555-8967.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Home contractor demand letter

June 20, 2024

Beyond Repair Construction
10 1st Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Beyond Repair Construction:

You recently did replacement tile work and other remodeling on my downstairs bathroom at 142 West Pine Street, here in Seattle. As per our written agreement, I paid you \$4,175 upon completion of the job on May 17, 2020. Only two weeks later, on June 1, I noticed that the tile in the north portion of the shower had sunk almost half an inch, with the result that our shower floor was uneven and water pooled in the downhill corner before eventually going down the drain.

I called you that day on June 1 to notify you of the faulty remodel job you did and the resulting damage you caused. In our phone conversations, you claimed that the problem was in my imagination, was my fault, and was too minor to deal with.

I paid for a reliable and safe remodeling job, and I expect to receive it. Please contact me within 10 days to arrange to pay me \$1,200 (the cost of redoing the work per the included estimate from ABC Tile) or to arrange to redo the work yourself at no additional cost to me. If I do not hear from you by July 1, 2024, I will promptly file in small claims court.

Sincerely,

Joe Garcia
142 West Pine St.
Seattle, WA 98101
555-123-4567

Email address

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice.
Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.