

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph (Lines 1-3) *"Hi. My name is Erica, and I help people at Harrington's. I read your message about your order, and I am really sorry about what happened."*

Strengths:

- Your opening introduces you in a friendly way that feels personal
- You acknowledge the problem straight away, which shows you understand something went wrong

Overly simple language → Your writing uses very basic sentences that sound like you're speaking to a young child rather than a customer. Phrases like "I help people at Harrington's" and "That's not good" are too casual and don't show the professional tone expected in business letters. A customer apology needs to sound sincere whilst maintaining a respectful, grown-up tone.

Exemplar: *My name is Erica, and I work in Customer Relations at Harrington's. I've reviewed your message regarding your order, and I sincerely apologise for the difficulties you've experienced.*

#2: Middle paragraphs (Lines 4-8) *"You were excited to get your order, and then it was all wrong. That must have felt really bad. Then you waited for someone to reply, and no one did on time. That probably made it even worse."*

Strengths:

- You show empathy by trying to imagine how the customer felt
- You recognise both problems: the wrong items and the delayed response

Repetitive sentence patterns → Your sentences all follow the same structure: short statements joined with "and" or "then." This makes your writing feel choppy and less professional. Sentences like "That must have felt really bad" and "That probably made it even worse" repeat the same idea without adding new information. Professional writing needs variety in sentence length and structure to keep the reader engaged.

Exemplar: *I understand how frustrating it must have been to receive incorrect items, especially after looking forward to your purchase. The delayed response to your enquiry only compounded this disappointment, and for that, I am truly sorry.*

#3: Closing paragraphs (Lines 13-15) *"Sometimes things go wrong, even when we try hard. But we learn from it, and we are learning from this. Thank you for telling us how you felt. It helps us get better."*

Strengths:

- You acknowledge that mistakes can happen, which sounds honest
- You thank the customer for their feedback

Weak accountability → Your writing makes excuses rather than taking full responsibility. Saying "sometimes things go wrong, even when we try hard" shifts blame away from the company and sounds like you're defending the mistake rather than owning it. The phrase "It helps us get better" is vague and doesn't explain what specific changes you'll make. Customers need to hear clear, confident promises about improvements, not general statements about learning.

Exemplar: *We take full responsibility for these errors and are implementing immediate changes to prevent such issues in future. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us maintain the high standards our customers deserve.*

■ Your apology letter shows good intentions and covers the important points—acknowledging the problem, offering compensation, and expressing hope for the future. However, the overall tone and structure need significant improvement to meet professional standards. Your language throughout the piece is too simple and conversational, making it sound less serious than a formal business apology should be. Customers who've had problems want to feel respected and reassured, not spoken to like children.

Additionally, your piece relies heavily on short, choppy sentences that become repetitive. Try combining related ideas into longer, more sophisticated sentences that flow smoothly. Your compensation offer (full refund, keeping items, 20% voucher) is generous, but the way you present it lacks confidence. Instead of saying "It's a small way to say sorry," you could emphasise the value you place on the customer's business.

Also, your explanation of what went wrong is missing entirely. Customers deserve to know whether their order was mispacked, if there was a system error, or if something else caused the problem. Your piece would benefit from one clear sentence explaining the cause. Finally, strengthen your closing by removing excuse-making phrases like "sometimes things go wrong" and replacing them with confident statements about specific improvements. Your goal is to rebuild trust, which requires showing the customer you're taking decisive action, not just "learning" in a general sense.

Overall Score: 40/50

Section 2

#1 Subject: ~~you~~ [You] Deserve Better – Our Apology and Promise to Improve

Dear ~~[whoever you are]~~ [Customer's Name]],

Hi. My name is Erica, and I ~~help people~~ [work in Customer Relations] at Harrington's. I ~~read~~ [have reviewed] your message about your order, and I am ~~really~~ [sincerely] sorry about what happened. You ~~didn't get~~ [did not receive] the right ~~things~~ [items] you ordered, and then no one ~~answered~~ [responded to] you quickly when you ~~asked~~ [sought] ~~for help~~ [assistance]. ~~That's not good~~ [This falls short of the service standards we uphold], and I understand why you're upset.

~~#2 You were excited to get your order, and then it was all wrong. That must have felt really bad. Then you waited for someone to reply, and no one did on time. That probably made it even worse. [I understand how frustrating it must have been to receive incorrect items, especially after looking forward to your purchase. The delayed response to your enquiry only compounded this disappointment, and for that, I am truly sorry.] I want you to know that we are not happy [deeply disappointed] that this happened either [as well].~~

We are ~~looking at~~ [investigating] what went wrong so we can ~~fix~~ [rectify] it. We ~~don't~~ [do not] want this to happen again to you or anyone else.

We will ~~give~~ [provide] you ~~with~~ a full refund for everything. You ~~don't~~ [do not] need to ~~send~~ [return] anything ~~back~~. You ~~can~~ [may] keep the ~~things~~ [items] you ~~got~~ [received], even if they are not the ~~right~~

[correct] ones. ~~It's a small way to say sorry.~~ [We hope this demonstrates our commitment to making things right.]

Also, we ~~added~~ [have applied] a 20% ~~off~~ [discount] voucher to your account for ~~next time~~ [your next purchase with] ~~you shop with~~ us. You can use it anytime ~~in the next~~ [within] 6 months. We hope this helps ~~a little and~~ [to] ~~shows~~ [show] you that we still ~~care~~ [value your custom].

You are a ~~special~~ [valued] customer to us. We are ~~sad~~ [disappointed] that we let you down. We really want you to ~~stay~~ [continue shopping] with Harrington's. We will do better.

~~#3 Sometimes things go wrong, even when we try hard. But we learn from it, and we are learning from this.~~ [We take full responsibility for these errors and are implementing immediate changes to prevent such issues in future.] Thank you for ~~telling us how you felt~~ [your feedback]. ~~It helps us get better.~~ [Your input is invaluable in helping us maintain the high standards our customers deserve.]

If you have any ~~more~~ [further] questions or ~~want~~ [wish] to ~~talk more~~ [discuss this further], ~~you can message us~~ [please contact me directly] and I'll ~~answer~~ [respond] as soon as ~~I can~~ [possible].

Thank you again. I hope we can ~~make you smile next time~~ [restore your confidence in Harrington's].

~~From~~ [Yours sincerely],

Erica Helson

Customer Relations Manager

Harrington's Department Store