

# How To Complain Well And Get Results

Consumer Reports, January 2020

Read full report at: [tinyurl.com/PTUGCR](https://tinyurl.com/PTUGCR)

or

<https://www.consumerreports.org/customer-service/got-bad-customer-service-how-to-complain-well-and-get-results/>

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## How Consumers Speak Out, By Age Group

Of the many ways consumers have to communicate with a company, social media is preferred (see number in bold) by those under 25, while email or phone calls are still the top choices for others.

CONTACT METHOD	UNDER 25 YEARS	25 TO 34	35 TO 54	OVER 55
Social Media	<b>32.3</b>	15.8	1.7	0.8
Mobile Application	27.1	22.3	5.8	0.8
Instant Messaging	18.1	20.4	5.4	0.5
Telephone	10.3	15.8	51.1	<b>90.0</b> 
Email	6.6	22.6	34.2	6.6
Virtual Assistant/AI	5.6	3.1	1.8	1.4

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### When to Tweet, Post, or Chat

When a company lets us down, most consumers—particularly those 35 and older—turn to the phone. “When you’re really angry, you want to talk to someone and convey your rage,” Goodman says. “On the phone, I can also tell from the agent’s voice if he’s really going to help me or not. That doesn’t come through via email or other nonverbal channels.” **Of course, calling can come with its own frustrations, including phone trees, an eternity spent on hold, and being ping ponged from person to person.**

In the CR poll, an online chat was the second most popular way to reach a company, after the phone. It’s true that response times, especially for basic questions, may be much quicker using a web chat than contacting a company by phone or email, but **none of the CR members or customer service experts we talked with said that chatting was any more effective.**

Social media lagged far behind phone calls, email, and web chats for a vast majority of people in CR’s informal poll and the Dimension Data report. But it appears to be a powerful secret weapon when it comes to customer service, many experts and consumers say.

**“Smart consumers know that if they contact a company on Twitter or Facebook, they’ll get a better response and a faster response than they will if they call customer service.”** No one else knows when you call a company with a problem, but on social media a lot of people see the complaint, which is exactly what companies are worried about. It certainly is a way to get a company’s attention.”

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### Facebook

**How to use it:** You may be able to post directly on a company’s Facebook page. You can also send a direct message by using the Send Message button under the cover photo. Posts will be visible to your friends and may appear in the company’s timeline; direct messages will not be visible to anyone but the company. (To send messages from your phone, download the Facebook Messenger app.)

**Pro:** Chances are you’re already using Facebook, so there’s no learning curve.

**Con:** The company can hide feedback in its timeline without the poster knowing.

**Keep in mind:** To maximize visibility, CR member Joey Davis recommends posting your query or complaint as a comment to an advertisement or other post from the brand. “I know the last thing a company wants on an ad meant to generate revenue is a testimonial from a user with problems,” he says.

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## Twitter

**How to use it:** Most companies have public profile pages that are easy to find using Twitter's search function. You can tweet a message by clicking on the blue "tweet" button (or the feather icon) and typing into the pop-up that appears. (You're limited to 280 characters.)

**Pro:** Tweets can't be deleted by companies (other than their own), so they're generally considered to be more public than Facebook comments.

**Con:** Some may find Twitter less intuitive to use than Facebook.

**Keep in mind:** After your initial tweet, companies will probably request that you communicate with them via direct messages. (These are hidden from public view and aren't limited to 280 characters.) In order to receive direct messages from a company, you need to "follow" it or activate the "receive messages from anyone" setting. (To do this, go to Direct Messages under the Privacy and Safety tab.)

Also, if you send a message to a company using the tweet button, it will appear only in the timelines of people who follow both you and the company. To make the tweet more public, don't begin it with the name of the company. Instead, place it within a phrase in the tweet (e.g., I've been bumped by @OverbookedAir. Help!). The tweet will then appear in the timeline of everyone who follows you.

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## Strategies for Using Social Media

### 1. Beware of Scam Accounts

Some Facebook and Twitter accounts have names that sound like the customer service pages of large companies but are not. They may have been created by imposters to get sensitive information such as credit card numbers. Always look for a check mark next to the name of the account. It verifies that it's valid and was created by the company.

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## 2. Target the Right Account

After you find an official account, make sure it's one the company actively monitors.

**On Facebook:** Read the About pane. If it says how long it takes for the company to respond, you'll know it monitors the page for feedback. (You can also click on the About link on the left side of the page, where companies often list the best way to contact them.) The response time may also be noted in the pop-up that appears when you click on the Send Message button. If the page doesn't have that button, the company may not monitor the page for comments.

**On Twitter:** Read the "bio" at the top of the page, which may say whether the account is monitored for questions and complaints and, if not, the correct account to contact. Also look at the Tweets & Replies tab to see how responsive the company is. Large companies that actively monitor Twitter may reply to customer tweets several times a minute. If you don't see replies, you may want to choose another way to contact the company.

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## 3. Protect Yourself

Don't post reservation numbers, telephone numbers, or other private or sensitive information on Facebook or Twitter pages. Sending them via the Send Message button or Messenger app on Facebook or by direct message (by clicking on the envelope icon) on Twitter is less risky but not without danger.

"Any personal information you enter into social media has the potential to be exploited in ways you and the company didn't intend". Never, under any circumstance, send credit card information by social media.

### 4. Stick to the Facts

Embellishing will diminish your credibility and could even expose you to legal action. Keep your complaint focused on the facts, and always provide documentation.

### 5. Keep Your Cool

Companies will have a record of your interactions and may be less inclined to be helpful if they see you've been abusive in the past. "Putting a company on the defensive makes it less likely to be collaborative".

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