



Guest Senior Correspondent Dr. KLB, Atlanta GA: A key part of my travel attitude is to make sure I get my money's worth. I've worked and saved carefully for a lifetime, so I never intend to pay for overcharges and mistakes of others.

I have a good track record at getting refunds after travel deals go wrong. Of course, I prefer to have things go smoothly than needing to complain later to try for satisfaction. When you get bad service at a restaurant, overcharged on a hotel bill or other questionable deals, here are tips that may help you complain effectively, without being a cry baby: Don't get mad; get money: In my experience, uncontrolled anger will do more harm than good. When you make your pitch, simply do it calmly, but be sure to speak clearly and stand up for your rights.

Take notes and names: When it happens, I record amounts charged, dates, times, locations and employees involved. If dealing with someone on the phone, always start by asking for a name and job title of that person.

Talk to a manager: You may be able to resolve the issue immediately with an employee. If not, ask to talk face-to-face or by phone with management. The higher-level person can usually make an instant decision to resolve the problem to your satisfaction.

Propose a solution: An effective complaint may often be accepted if you propose a solution. When I have problems with flights, I request a refund or ticket vouchers for future flights. At a restaurant, I request a refund or a free future meal. If I make my requests with calm respect, the resulting allowances are often of higher value than my original costs.

Be reasonable about your demand: If you had a problem with your economy seat flight from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, don't demand a first class ticket to Europe as compensation. The more reasonable your request, the more the company is likely to honor it.