

BUS368—NEGATIVE NEWS LETTER ASSIGNMENT

Use guidance from [Table 17.1: “Negative News Message Sample Script”](#) in Scott McLean’s *Business Communication for Success* to write a negative news letter based on the scenario below. Be sure to read the final paragraph of this scenario so you understand the restrictions the assignment places on what you can write. Those restrictions have been incorporated to maximize the learning potential of your efforts. Once you have finished your letter, proof it and upload to the portal for grading. The grading rubric is in the Handout Section on the Main Page.

Customer Complaint: On April 4, 2011, customer Maud Bennett telephoned your store, The Merchant’s Secret, claiming that, on March 8, 2011, she used her Merchant’s Secret department store credit card to purchase a produce scale for \$54.50. However, her credit card billing statement indicates that she was charged for two other purchases from your store on that same day: one for \$8.95 and another for \$4.95. She does not have the receipt for the produce scale because by the time she got her statement she’d used the scale, had no intention of returning it, and so she had thrown out the receipt. However, she notes that since the statement shows the three purchases, that should be sufficient proof that she was charged for items she did not purchase. Moreover, she points out that her card had not been lost or stolen during that time. Mrs. Bennett wants you to credit her account the funds she claims she was wrongly charged.

Business Investigation: You investigate Mrs. Bennett’s claim and discover that two additional purchases were indeed charged to her card on March 8, 2011. A Reuben sandwich combo was purchased for \$8.95 from the store’s lunch counter and a birthday card for \$4.95 was purchased from the gifts department. However, the records of the charges indicated that each purchase was made at a different time: the produce scale was purchased at 10:00 a.m., the sandwich combo at 1:30 p.m., and the birthday card at 2:15 p.m. You check the maintenance records of your cash register and credit card scanner to make sure they were functioning properly during the time frame of the purchases and find nothing was amiss.

You also interview your store personnel to see if anyone remembered any problems with the equipment and if they remembered any of the purchases. A cashier did remember the birthday card purchase because it was a very pretty card and the store doesn’t sell many cards. Unfortunately, while she was sure the purchase was not made by a man (because most of the store’s customers are women and so she would have remembered if the customer had been a man), she is certain that she would not recognize the woman who purchased the birthday card. Meanwhile, records from the lunch counter also confirm the purchase of the Reuben sandwich combo.

Letter Restrictions: Write a letter to Mrs. Bennett that explains why you will not be crediting back to her account the charges from the extra purchases. The letter should include the fact that the cash registers and card scanners used by The Merchant’s Secret do not allow employees to retain any credit card information. It should also clearly reflect your desire to retain Mrs. Bennett as a customer. Use only the details provided in this scenario to develop your letter. Do not add other facts, however, you can discuss realistic circumstances which might have produced the situation, such as another family member may have used Mrs. Bennett’s card. You may also suggest to Mrs. Bennett that she may have forgotten that she returned to the store for lunch and/or that the birthday card was an unplanned purchase she made on her way out after lunch.