

Remember, Court is a last resort.

➤ Before you go to Court, **think carefully**.

Ask yourself:

- | Will I be able to find the trader?
It is **your** job to find him/her.
- | Have I got **evidence**?
It is **your** job to prove your case.
- | Has the trader got money to pay what the Court may award?
It's **not worth** suing a person or limited company if they have gone bust.

If you have lost money on a faulty gas appliance, don't waste more money on a case you cannot win.



Once you have decided what your rights are, you will need to take a series of steps to solve your problem. It may seem a long procedure, but it does work.

- If you can, **stop using the appliance**. You **must** stop using it if a safety problem is involved.
- Be certain that the fault was not caused by misuse, an accident, failure to follow the instructions or normal wear and tear.
- You will need proof of purchase. If you haven't got a receipt you can use a credit card voucher or cheque stub. If someone was with you when you bought the appliance, they can back you up. Remember - it is up to you to show where and when you bought it. **If all else fails, you still have your word.**

You will now need to contact the trader straight away and report the problem.

- If you bought the appliance locally, visit the trader. Take any proof of purchase with you.
- If you cannot go back to the shop, either phone or write to the trader. If you write, briefly set out the problem and ask the trader to get in touch with you. Include a **copy** of your proof of purchase. Don't send originals.

- Ask to speak to, or write to, the manager or owner. Explain your problem, keep calm but be firm. Make it clear whether you want a **refund**, a **repair** or **compensation**. Remember you may be entitled to a refund or repair **plus** compensation. You may **still** be entitled to a refund when a repair turns out to be unsatisfactory. Don't **demand** something you're not entitled to.

Your problem may well be solved at this stage. **WELL DONE!**
Put the pack away for future use.

- If there is doubt about your claim you may ask or the trader may arrange, for somebody to call out and examine the appliance within a reasonable period of time, say 7 to 14 days. It may be somebody from the shop, the manufacturer or the trader's own service department. When they come, make a note of the person's name, where they are from and anything they may say about the problem.
- If the problem still remains you **must** write to the trader. See the sample letter enclosed. If you know the head office address, send them a **copy** of your letter as well. Send your letter by **Recorded Delivery**. (You must go to the Post Office for this). **Keep a copy** of each letter.
- If the trader replies and asks for more information, be as helpful as you can. This may help the trader solve your problem. If the trader asks for receipts or other documents send **copies**, not the originals. **Keep a copy** of any reply you send.

- If you get no reply to your letter, send the trader a **reminder**. See the sample letter enclosed and send a **copy** of your last letter. Remember to **keep a copy** of both letters. Send your reminder letter by **Recorded Delivery**.
- If the trader offers to do something, but not what you have asked for, you can either accept the offer or **negotiate** for a better offer. Be reasonable in what you are prepared to accept. Sometimes it can be better to compromise. Only **you** can decide this. (**Keep a copy** of every letter you write).

Most problems should be solved by this stage. If yours isn't and you still feel you have a valid claim - **PRESS AHEAD**.

- If the trader doesn't reply to your letters, refuses to do anything, or makes a **final** offer you are not prepared to accept, you will have to think about going to Court. **Only a Court** can **order** a trader to sort out your problem. Most claims can be settled by an informal procedure in the Small Claims Court. This doesn't need to involve an advocate. You can pick up further leaflets that explain fully the procedure from the Court.
- If you decide to take the trader to Court you will have to prove what the original fault was and that it was not due to fair wear and tear or misuse since purchase. See the other green leaflet **IDENTIFYING THE FAULT**.