

## Letter's to "Dear Abby"

The letters below are rumoured to be actual Dear Abby letters. We are not sure if they are authentic or not but they make for interesting and funny learning material for ESL students / learners of the English language.

Who is Abby? Abby is the pen name of the popular columnist who has been giving people advice through her replies to their letters which she has been publishing in her newspaper column since the 1950's. Below are some examples of letters. ESL students and English teachers can see real letters in newspapers around the world. They are useful for self study or class discussion.

### EXERCISES:

**#1.** Dear Abby,

"A couple of women moved in across the hall from me. One is a middle-aged gym teacher and the other is a social worker in her mid-twenties. These two women go everywhere together and I've never seen a man go into or leave their apartment. Do you think they could be Lebanese?" - Ann

**Q:** What is odd about this letter? What is the word that Ann probably meant to use here?

**Discussion:** Topic: Discuss issues which pertain to same sex partners, sexual orientation, etc. (Laws, opinions, rights, benefits, etc).

**Key words** and ideas: same sex couples, same sex marriage, sexual orientation, same sex rights (equality, marriage, spousal, medical insurance, etc).

**Same Sex Marriage in Canada:** In Canada, same sex couples are allowed to legally marry as of 2005 with the introduction of the Civil Marriage Act.

**Writing Exercise:** You are Abby, write a reply to Ann.

**#2:** Dear Abby,

What can I do about all the Sex, Nudity, Fowl Language and Violence on my VCR?  
- Tina

**Q:** What is odd about this letter? What is a VCR?

**Q:** What is the difference between fowl and foul?

**Discussion:** Topic: Sex, violence and 'foul' language on TV / Movies – how does it affect society (even if you enjoy it)? What about younger viewers and these things on TV/movies? Discuss with your partner or group.

**Writing:** Reply to Tina in any way you wish. You can be serious or humorous, your choice, the advice is yours to give.

**#3:** Dear Abby,

I have a man I can't trust. He cheats so much, I'm not even sure the baby I'm carrying is his. – Beth

**Q:** What is wrong about this letter? (PS – it is VERY wrong).

**Discussion:** Cheating – What is cheating? What are some reasons that people cheat? What is Monogamy? What is polygamy?

**Writing:** Write a reply to Beth.

**#4:** Dear Abby,

I am a twenty-three year old liberated woman who has been on the pill for two years. It's getting expensive and I think my boyfriend should share half the cost, but I don't know him well enough to discuss money with him. – Jen

**Q:** What is the pill?

**Q:** What is a "liberated" woman?

**Q:** What is odd about this letter?

**Q:** What is PMS?

**Discussion:**

- Should the boyfriend share the cost of the "pill"? Why? If the girl is not on the pill, should she pay half of the cost for condoms?
- Women also use the "pill" to help with menstrual symptoms such as cramps, length of menstruation period; since there are more benefits to the woman than the man, should he still pay half of the cost? Why or why not?
- What are some other methods of birth control?
- Is there adequate sex education in middle and high schools?
- Are you, or this class in general uncomfortable discussing this topic? (Is this topic important to discuss regardless of how comfortable you are)?
- Are women in your country "liberated"? Do laws treat / protect women as equals with men (Give examples). Is the equality merely formal (on paper only) or substantive (in practise) (put your money where your mouth is equality)?
- Is there equality for the following; gay/lesbian, all races, disabled people, elderly, young in your country?

**Writing:** Reply to Beth

**#5:** Dear Abby,

I've suspected that my husband has been fooling around, and when confronted with the evidence, he denied everything - and said it would never happen again. - Tess

Q: What does "fooling around" mean in the above letter?

Q: Other meanings for "fooling around: "Quit fooling around, lets get serious about this work now." (explain the difference even though the words are the same).

Q: To confront means: \_\_\_\_\_

- I Confr \_\_\_\_\_ him yesterday.
- Will you \_\_\_\_\_ him tomorrow about the problem he created?
- \* I am not a \_\_\_\_\_ person. (adjective)

Q: Explain the problem with this letter.

Writing: Reply to Tess.

**#6:** DEAR ABBY: Our son was married in January. Five months later his wife had a ten-pound baby girl. They said the baby was premature. Tell me, can a baby this big be that early?

WONDERING

DEAR WONDERING: The baby was on time, the wedding was late.

Q: Explain what this situation is about.

**#7:** DEAR ABBY: When you are being introduced, is it all right to say, "I've heard a lot about you"?

RITA

DEAR RITA: It depends on what you've heard.

Q: What are some good things to say and some things you should not say/ ask when you first meet someone (what is too personal / what is acceptable)?

**#8:** DEAR ABBY: What's the difference between a wife and a mistress?

BESS

DEAR BESS: Night and Day.

Q: Explain the answer to Bess.