

What do people want from an apology?

They may want you to

- Accept you have done wrong
- Confirm they were right
- Understand why things went wrong
- Accept responsibility
- Reassure them the problem has been dealt with and won't happen again
- Try to repair the relationship
- Help restore reputations.

Each complaint is unique. Your apology will need to be based on the individual circumstances. Here is some general good practice.

1. Timing is important. Once you find out that you have done wrong, if you delay then you may lose your opportunity to apologise.
2. To make an apology meaningful, do not distance yourself from the apology and do not let there be any doubt that you are owning up to your mistake (for example, say 'it was my fault' rather than 'if mistakes have been made.....')
3. The language you use should be clear plain and direct.
4. Your apology should sound natural and sincere.
5. Your apology should not make the offence seem unimportant (for example by saying 'no-one else has complained')

Taken from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman 'Guidance on Apology'

<http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/handling-complaints/resources/apology>