

S.D.N.Y. Federal Civil Complaint Drafting Template

United States District Court for the Southern District of New York

Prepared by The American Newspaper

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Working Draft for Complaint Preparation

This document is a drafting aid based on placeholder facts. It is not a final pleading and is not legal advice. Before filing, all facts, jurisdictional allegations, legal theories, administrative-exhaustion requirements, filing rules, and judge-specific rules must be verified by counsel.

Date: May 26, 2026

I. Preliminary Information Needed Before Filing

Because the factual record remains in placeholder form, the following information should be collected before a final federal complaint is filed in the Southern District of New York.

- Incident date, location, participants, and the precise conduct giving rise to the dispute.
- Defendant-by-defendant factual allegations: who did what, when, where, and how Plaintiff was harmed.
- Plaintiff's domicile/citizenship, or for an entity, state of formation/incorporation and principal place of business.
- Defendant's domicile/citizenship, or for an entity, state of formation/incorporation and principal place of business.
- For an LLC or partnership, the citizenship of every member or partner.
- Whether the claim arises under federal law or only under New York/state law.
- Whether the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs.
- Specific connection between the dispute and Manhattan/New York County or another location within S.D.N.Y.
- Relevant evidence: contracts, emails, text messages, invoices, employment records, medical records, agency filings, or transaction documents.
- Existence of arbitration clauses, forum-selection clauses, prior lawsuits, related cases, agency exhaustion, or notice requirements.
- Requested relief: damages, injunction, declaratory judgment, specific performance, attorney's fees, costs, and jury trial.

II. Drafting Assumptions

- The draft uses placeholders where facts are unknown.
- The draft is designed for Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rules 8 and 10, including a short and plain statement, numbered paragraphs, and separate counts.
- If the claim sounds in fraud, Rule 9(b) requires the circumstances of fraud to be pleaded with particularity.
- Jurisdictional allegations must be verified before filing. Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction.
- If diversity jurisdiction is asserted, complete diversity and an amount in controversy exceeding \$75,000 must be adequately pleaded.
- If federal question jurisdiction is asserted, the complaint must identify the federal statute, constitutional provision, or federal right at issue.
- Venue must be tied to the standards in 28 U.S.C. Section 1391. For Manhattan-based events, Section 1391(b)(2) will often be the strongest venue theory.

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

[PLAINTIFF FULL LEGAL NAME], Plaintiff, v. [DEFENDANT FULL LEGAL NAME], [DEFENDANT 2 FULL LEGAL NAME, if any], Defendants.	Civil Action No. _____ COMPLAINT JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
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Plaintiff [PLAINTIFF FULL LEGAL NAME] ("Plaintiff"), by and through undersigned counsel, alleges as follows against Defendants [DEFENDANT FULL LEGAL NAME] and [DEFENDANT 2 FULL LEGAL NAME] (collectively, "Defendants"):

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a civil action arising from [briefly describe the core dispute: e.g., Defendants' breach of contract, fraudulent misrepresentations, unlawful employment practices, civil-rights violations, securities violations, consumer-protection violations, negligence, or other wrongful conduct].
2. Plaintiff seeks relief for injuries and damages caused by Defendants' conduct, including [monetary losses, business losses, emotional distress, medical expenses, reputational harm, statutory damages, punitive damages, attorney's fees, injunctive relief, declaratory relief, and/or other relief].
3. The material events giving rise to this action occurred in whole or in substantial part in [Manhattan, New York County, New York / other location within the Southern District of New York], including [specific events].

II. PARTIES

4. Plaintiff [PLAINTIFF FULL LEGAL NAME] is an individual domiciled in [CITY, STATE] and is a citizen of [STATE] for purposes of diversity jurisdiction.
5. Plaintiff's address is [PLAINTIFF ADDRESS].
6. If Plaintiff is an entity: Plaintiff [ENTITY NAME] is a [corporation/LLC/partnership/other entity] organized under the laws of [STATE/COUNTRY], with its principal place of business at [ADDRESS]. Plaintiff is a citizen of [STATE(S)] for purposes of 28 U.S.C. Section 1332.
7. Defendant [DEFENDANT FULL LEGAL NAME] is an individual domiciled in [CITY, STATE] and is a citizen of [STATE].
8. Defendant's address is [DEFENDANT ADDRESS].
9. If Defendant is an entity: Defendant [ENTITY NAME] is a [corporation/LLC/partnership/other entity] organized under the laws of [STATE/COUNTRY], with its principal place of business at [ADDRESS]. Defendant is a citizen of [STATE(S)] for purposes of 28 U.S.C. Section 1332.
10. Defendant [DEFENDANT NAME] conducts business in New York, transacts business in New York, committed acts or omissions in New York giving rise to this action, and/or caused injury in New York

through the conduct described below.

III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

A. Subject Matter Jurisdiction

11. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. Section 1331 because Plaintiff asserts claims arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States, including [identify federal statute, constitutional provision, or federal cause of action].

12. If applicable: This Court also has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. Section 1332(a) because the matter in controversy exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs, and there is complete diversity of citizenship between Plaintiff and Defendants.

13. Plaintiff is a citizen of [STATE]. Defendant [NAME] is a citizen of [STATE]. No Plaintiff is a citizen of the same State as any Defendant.

14. If applicable: This Court has supplemental jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. Section 1367(a) over Plaintiff's related state-law claims because those claims are so related to the federal claims that they form part of the same case or controversy under Article III of the United States Constitution.

15. If no federal question exists and diversity is incomplete: Plaintiff acknowledges that the jurisdictional basis must be revised before filing, because federal court jurisdiction cannot rest solely on state-law claims between non-diverse parties unless another valid jurisdictional basis exists.

B. Personal Jurisdiction

16. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant [NAME] because Defendant [resides in New York / is domiciled in New York / maintains its principal place of business in New York / transacts business in New York / contracted to supply goods or services in New York / committed tortious acts in New York / caused injury in New York arising from purposeful New York-directed conduct].

17. Defendant purposefully availed itself of the privilege of conducting activities in New York by [specific conduct: negotiating, contracting, sending communications, receiving payment, performing services, operating offices, marketing, employing Plaintiff, committing acts in Manhattan, or other conduct].

18. Plaintiff's claims arise directly from or relate to Defendant's New York contacts, including [specific facts].

C. Venue

19. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. Section 1391(b)(1) because [all Defendants reside in New York and at least one Defendant resides in the Southern District of New York].

20. Venue is also proper under 28 U.S.C. Section 1391(b)(2) because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred in this District, including [specific Manhattan/S.D.N.Y. events].

21. If applicable: Venue is also proper because a substantial part of the property that is the subject of this action is situated in this District, namely [describe property].

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

22. On or about [DATE], Plaintiff [describe Plaintiff's status, relationship to Defendant, or role].

23. On or about [DATE], Defendant [NAME] [specific act or omission].

24. At the time, Defendant [NAME] knew or reasonably should have known that [specific fact].

25. Plaintiff reasonably relied on / was affected by / was harmed by Defendant's conduct because [specific causal facts].
26. On or about [DATE], Plaintiff and Defendant [entered into a contract / had a business relationship / had an employment relationship / engaged in communications / completed a transaction / other].
27. The relevant agreement, communication, policy, transaction, or event provided that [specific term or representation].
28. Plaintiff performed Plaintiff's obligations by [specific performance].
29. Defendant failed to perform, breached, misrepresented, discriminated, retaliated, acted negligently, violated federal law, or otherwise engaged in wrongful conduct by [specific facts].
30. Plaintiff notified Defendant of the issue on or about [DATE] by [email, letter, phone call, meeting, legal notice, internal complaint, agency charge, or other means].
31. Defendant responded by [specific response] or failed to respond.
32. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's conduct, Plaintiff suffered [specific injuries].
33. Plaintiff's damages include, but are not limited to, [amount of out-of-pocket losses], [lost profits], [lost wages], [medical expenses], [emotional distress], [reputational harm], [statutory damages], [attorney's fees], and [other damages].
34. Plaintiff has complied with all conditions precedent to filing this action, or such conditions have been waived, excused, or are inapplicable.
35. If administrative exhaustion is required: Plaintiff filed a charge/complaint with [EEOC/SEC/FINRA/agency/other] on [DATE], received [right-to-sue letter/final agency action/other] on [DATE], and files this action within the applicable deadline.

V. CAUSES OF ACTION

COUNT I - [NAME OF CLAIM] Against Defendant [NAME]

36. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 35 as if fully set forth herein.
37. The legal elements of this claim are: (a) [Element 1]; (b) [Element 2]; (c) [Element 3]; and (d) [damages/causation/other required element].
38. Defendant [NAME] satisfied Element 1 because [specific facts, not legal conclusions].
39. Defendant [NAME] satisfied Element 2 because [specific facts].
40. Defendant [NAME] satisfied Element 3 because [specific facts].
41. Defendant's conduct caused Plaintiff's injuries because [specific causal chain].
42. Plaintiff suffered damages including [specific categories and amounts, if known].
43. Defendant [NAME] is liable to Plaintiff for [claim] because [defendant-specific theory of responsibility].

COUNT II - BREACH OF CONTRACT Against Defendant [NAME] [Use only if applicable]

44. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 43 as if fully set forth herein.
45. On or about [DATE], Plaintiff and Defendant entered into a valid and enforceable contract concerning [subject matter].
46. The contract required Defendant to [specific contractual obligation].

47. Plaintiff performed all material obligations required of Plaintiff under the contract, including [specific performance].
48. Defendant breached the contract by [specific breach].
49. Defendant's breach caused Plaintiff to suffer damages, including [specific damages].
50. Plaintiff is entitled to recover damages in an amount to be determined at trial, but not less than [AMOUNT].

COUNT III - FRAUD / FRAUDULENT MISREPRESENTATION Against Defendant [NAME] [Use only if applicable]

Note: If this count is used, plead with Rule 9(b) particularity.

51. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 50 as if fully set forth herein.
52. On or about [DATE], at [PLACE], Defendant [NAME] made the following statement to Plaintiff: '[exact or substantially exact statement].'
53. The statement was false because [specific reason].
54. At the time Defendant made the statement, Defendant knew it was false or acted with reckless disregard for its truth because [specific facts supporting knowledge or recklessness].
55. Defendant intended Plaintiff to rely on the statement by [specific conduct].
56. Plaintiff reasonably relied on the statement by [specific reliance].
57. Plaintiff was injured as a direct result of that reliance because [specific causal facts].
58. Plaintiff suffered damages including [specific damages].

COUNT IV - NEGLIGENCE / TORT CLAIM Against Defendant [NAME] [Use only if applicable]

59. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 58 as if fully set forth herein.
60. Defendant owed Plaintiff a duty to [specific duty].
61. Defendant breached that duty by [specific negligent act or omission].
62. Defendant's breach was the actual and proximate cause of Plaintiff's injuries because [specific causal facts].
63. Plaintiff suffered damages including [specific physical, economic, emotional, or business injuries].

COUNT V - FEDERAL STATUTORY OR CIVIL-RIGHTS CLAIM Against Defendant [NAME] [Use only if applicable]

64. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 63 as if fully set forth herein.
65. Defendant violated [federal statute or constitutional right] by [specific conduct].
66. Plaintiff is a person protected by [statute/right] because [specific facts].
67. Defendant acted under [color of state law / federal statutory coverage / employer status / regulated entity status / other required status] because [specific facts].
68. Defendant's conduct caused Plaintiff to suffer [specific injuries].
69. Plaintiff is entitled to [statutory damages, compensatory damages, punitive damages, injunctive relief, declaratory relief, attorney's fees, costs, or other relief] under [statute].

VI. DAMAGES AND INJURIES

70. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' conduct, Plaintiff suffered actual damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

71. Plaintiff's damages include [economic losses], [lost income], [lost business opportunities], [out-of-pocket expenses], [medical expenses], [emotional distress], [reputational harm], [statutory damages], and [other damages].

72. Plaintiff is entitled to prejudgment and post-judgment interest to the extent permitted by law.

73. Plaintiff is entitled to attorney's fees and costs to the extent permitted by contract, statute, rule, or other applicable law.

74. Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages if the evidence establishes that Defendants acted willfully, maliciously, recklessly, fraudulently, or with conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights.

VII. DEMAND FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court enter judgment in Plaintiff's favor and against Defendants, and award the following relief:

A. Compensatory damages in an amount to be determined at trial;

B. Consequential damages, lost profits, lost wages, business losses, medical expenses, and other economic damages, as applicable;

C. Statutory damages, if available under [applicable statute];

D. Punitive damages, if permitted by law;

E. Declaratory judgment that [specific declaration];

F. Preliminary and permanent injunctive relief requiring Defendants to [specific action] and/or prohibiting Defendants from [specific conduct];

G. Specific performance of [contractual obligation], if applicable;

H. Prejudgment and post-judgment interest;

I. Reasonable attorney's fees and costs, if permitted by law;

J. Such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

VIII. JURY DEMAND

75. Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Dated: [DATE]
New York, New York

Respectfully submitted,

[LAW FIRM NAME]

By: /s/ [ATTORNEY NAME]

[ATTORNEY NAME]

[Bar Number, if applicable]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

[Telephone]

[Email]

Attorney for Plaintiff

[PLAINTIFF NAME]

IX. Filing Checklist for S.D.N.Y.

Item	Required?	Notes
Complaint	Required	Rule 8/10 format; numbered paragraphs; jurisdiction, venue, claims, damages, relief, and jury demand.
Civil Cover Sheet	Required	File the current civil cover sheet form used for opening a civil action in S.D.N.Y.
Summons (AO 440)	Required	Submit a summons for each defendant so the Clerk can issue it for service.
Filing fee or IFP application	Required	Pay the civil filing fee or submit an application to proceed without prepaying fees or costs.
ECF filing	Required for attorneys	Attorneys generally file electronically through CM/ECF after registration; pro se procedures may differ.
Service of process	Required	Serve the summons and complaint under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4.
Rule 7.1 Disclosure Statement	Often required	Corporate parties and diversity cases require careful disclosure of ownership and citizenship information.
Related case statement or notice	If applicable	Check S.D.N.Y. Local Rules and the judge's individual rules for related-case obligations.
Judge's Individual Rules	After assignment	Check pre-motion letter, conference, and motion-practice requirements.
Fraud claim review	If applicable	Rule 9(b) requires who, what, when, where, and how for alleged fraud.
Administrative exhaustion	If applicable	Employment, civil-rights, securities, agency, or statutory claims may require exhaustion or notice.
Diversity verification	If applicable	Confirm complete diversity, amount in controversy, and entity citizenship, especially for LLCs.

X. Source Notes

The following public legal materials should be verified directly before filing, because rules and court procedures can change.

- Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 - General Rules of Pleading: https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp/rule_8
- Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 9 - Pleading Special Matters: https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp/rule_9
- Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10 - Form of Pleadings: https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp/rule_10
- Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 7.1 - Disclosure Statement: https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp/rule_7.1
- 28 U.S.C. Section 1331 - Federal Question: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/1331>
- 28 U.S.C. Section 1332 - Diversity of Citizenship: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/1332>
- 28 U.S.C. Section 1367 - Supplemental Jurisdiction: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/1367>
- 28 U.S.C. Section 1391 - Venue Generally: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/1391>
- S.D.N.Y. Forms and Rules: <https://www.nysd.uscourts.gov/forms> and <https://www.nysd.uscourts.gov/rules>