



Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Write a polite and persuasive letter on an animal-focused issue that is important to them.
- Understand how and why letter writing is an important way to create change.
- Understand the basic components of writing a persuasive letter.

Time Needed

30–60 minutes

Materials

- Internet access (for research)
- Whiteboard / chalkboard
- Dry erase markers / chalk
- “How to Write a Letter” worksheet
- “Letter Writing Sample” handout

Activity 3: Letter Writing

Overview: Students will learn that letter writing is a simple but effective tactic that can influence politicians and policy-makers to make humane choices. It has been used in almost every modern social justice movement and can reap tremendous results.

Procedure:

Introduction

Explain to students that letter writing can make the world a better place and is an important way to create change. Letter writing has been a tactic used by many people and organizations.

Success Stories:

- <http://www.sierraclub.org/planet/199510/letterwriting.asp>
- <http://www.amnesty.org.au/write/>
- http://www.sdpb.org/WildHorses/wild_horse_annie.asp

Writing Letters, Making Change

1. Ask students to list all the problems faced by animals that could be solved by human beings. Write down students’ responses on the board.
2. Instruct each student to choose one of the listed problems and brainstorm what kind of group can help the most to solve that problem (e.g., a private company, federal government, state government, local government).
3. Hand out to each student the “How to Write a Letter” worksheet. Read the worksheet as a group and answer any general questions about it.
4. Instruct the students to complete the worksheet. The students might need to do extra research to find addresses, facts about the problem they are writing about, or companies that are involved with the issue.
5. Once the students have completed their worksheets, hand out the “Letter Writing Sample.” As a class, analyze the various parts of the letter (Headings, Body, Salutation, etc.) and the language used in the letter.



Insider Tips

- If the students are having difficulty brainstorming on their own, be prepared to offer them some examples of problems animals are currently facing.
- If you are interested in a particular pending bill, you can focus this activity on that bill. Present the students with background information on the topic and the bill's purpose. Using this activity, have students write letters to their representatives.

Classroom Teachers

- Allowing students to become "experts" on their problems can easily extend this activity. Have students do research (in or out of class) on their issues and all the key actors involved. After students have adequately researched their topics, have them write their persuasive letters.
- This activity can be combined with another lesson from this Resource Guide. After students have learned about a particular topic and have become passionate about the problem, incorporate the letter writing activity as a way for students to engage in creating solutions to the problem.

Outside Humane Educators

- If you are unaware of how much your students know about animal-focused issues, create your own list of problems animals face. Additionally, supply students with background information on these subjects so they can make better educated decisions when choosing their topics.

Activity 3: Letter Writing (continued)

6. Instruct the students, using their completed worksheets as a guide, to write their own persuasive letters. Remind students that all letters must be polite, legible and follow the format discussed in the worksheet.

Wrap Up:

1. Once students have completed their persuasive letters, have student volunteers read their letters aloud to the class.
2. Collect the letters and mail them to their respective destinations.



Letter Writing Sample

John Q. Public
123 Fake Street
Anywhere, NY 12345

May 22, 2012

Rep. Jane Kongrisswohman
1010 E. Lected Blvd.
Anywhere, NY 12345

Dear Ms. Kongrisswohman:

My name is John Q. Public, and I go to school at Anywhere High School. I'm contacting you because I would like you to vote for House Bill 9876. This bill would ban the sale of shark fins.

Recently, I learned how sharks are being caught and have their fins cut off to make shark fin soup. After having their fins cut off, the sharks are then thrown back in the water to slowly die. I love animals and I believe this practice is very cruel. Also, it is causing shark populations to become threatened with extinction. The main reason that you should support this bill is that sharks are an important part of the ocean's ecosystem. If they go extinct, it will hurt all of the animals who live in the ocean.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I appreciate all the great work you do to help our community.

Sincerely,

John Q. Public

How to Write a Letter

Name: _____

Date: _____

Step 1: What Change Do You Want?

It is important that what you ask for is reasonable. It is unlikely that a business or government official is going to make a huge change overnight. That doesn't mean that huge changes will never happen, but usually huge changes begin with many small, reasonable changes.

It is also important that you are specific about what you want. You want the person who reads your letter to know exactly what you want him/her to do. For example, if you are writing to government officials, tell them about a specific bill and how you want them to vote on it.

What are you trying to persuade someone to do?

Step 2: Choose the Right Person

It is important that you choose the right person as the recipient of your letter. In businesses, there are certain people who have more power or influence over a company. In the government, it is best to contact the people who most directly represent you. If you live in Chicago, for example, it would be best to send the letter to your local alderman, state senator, or state representative.

To whom do you want to send your letter?

Step 3: Brainstorm Reasons to Support Your Opinion

Take time to brainstorm at least five reasons why you think the person who receives your letter should agree with you. Then look at your list and decide which three reasons are the best. Circle these three reasons and use them in your letter.

Brainstorm list:

How to Write a Letter (continued)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Step 4: Write the Letter

Use the format that is explained below to create your letter. Remember to be polite in the letter. If you are rude, the person who reads it will become upset and will be more likely to disagree with you. Also, your handwriting needs to be neat and legible. If the person cannot read your letter, it will be meaningless.

Format for the letter:

Your Name

Your Address

Your Town, State, Zip Code

Date

Letter Recipient's Name

Letter Recipient's Address

Letter Recipient's Town, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. (Letter Recipient's Last Name):

Paragraph 1: In this paragraph you will introduce yourself and the issue you are writing about. First, mention where you live and where you go to school. Then, tell the person exactly what you would like him/her to do. Don't go into a lot of detail about the issue because you will be doing that in the second paragraph.

Paragraph 2: In this paragraph, you will go into detail about why the recipient should agree with you. Use the reasons that you brainstormed in Step 3 above. Write at least one sentence about each of these reasons.

Paragraph 3: In this paragraph, you will thank the person for reading your letter.

Sincerely,

Your signature