

# Let's Write a Friendly Letter

Give your students an authentic writing experience, a chance to build empathy, and the ability to make cross-country connections by writing letters to their pen pals.

**Grades:** 3-5

**Time:** One 45-minute class period and one 15-minute class period

**Objectives:**

1. The student will write a friendly letter that includes greeting, body, and closing.
2. The student will address an envelope using the correct format.
3. The student will understand how we use written communication to build relationships.
4. The student will understand how the mail system operates.

**Materials:**

- *Friendly Guide to Writing a Friendly Letter* classroom poster
- Copy of *My First Draft* page for each student (back of poster)
- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Cards from The USPS Pen Pal Project kit
- Small envelopes from The USPS Pen Pal Project kit
- Sticker sheet from The USPS Pen Pal Project kit
- Large teacher envelopes for mailing from The USPS Pen Pal Project kit (you'll need to provide your own stamps; you might want to ask families to send some in as a classroom donation).

## Session I: Writing the Letter

**Build background knowledge.** Ask students to share what they already know about writing letters and about the U.S. Mail™ system.

How is mail delivered to your family?

Have you ever received a letter or card?

How did it make you feel?

What are some reasons we send mail?

**Introduce The USPS Pen Pal Project.** Share with students the exciting news that they'll be participating in The USPS Pen Pal Project along with 25,000 other classrooms across the United States. They'll get their very own pen pal and have the opportunity to write letters to them throughout the school year. In this lesson, they'll write their first one. But first, they'll learn the parts of a letter.

**Teach new vocabulary.** Hang the *Friendly Guide to Writing a Friendly Letter* poster where all your students can see it. Have students take turns reading the letter aloud and then sharing the call-outs. For letter greetings and closings, invite students to brainstorm fun ways to open and end their letters. Write them on the poster!

**Model the process.** Before having your students write their pen pal letters, model the process by writing a letter to an imaginary pen pal together as a class. Make it fun and give students opportunities to contribute ideas.

**Pre-writing.** Distribute copies of the *My First Draft* page to your students. This is their first letter to their pen pal! If they get stuck, they can check out the list of writing topics and questions to ask.

**Independent work.** Ask your students to write the first draft of their pen pal letters. Remind them to use the poster and the pen pal letter you wrote as a class as their models. Once they are finished, you may want to edit them or have them edit in pairs. Their final drafts will go on the inside of the cards from the kit. Make sure you give them time to fill out the fun elements on the front and back.

**Standards:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



## Session 2: Mailing the Letter

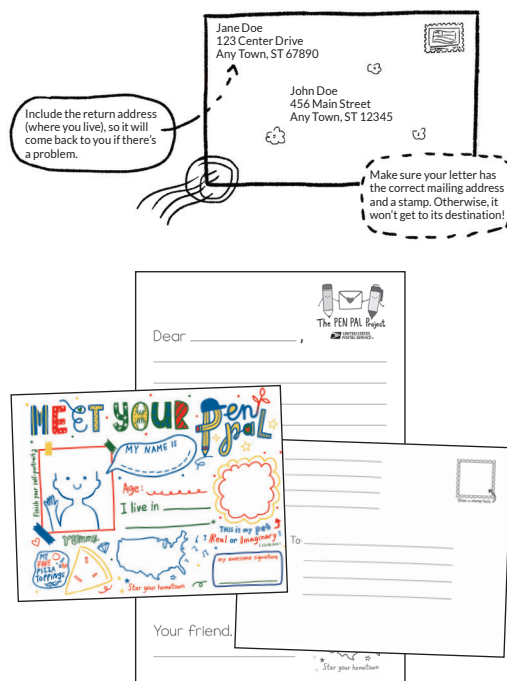
Once students have finished their letters, return their attention to the classroom poster.

Talk through the important elements of addressing an envelope: the correct mailing address, including the ZIP Code™ number, the return address, and, of course, a stamp.

Draw a large rectangle envelope on the whiteboard or chart paper. Model the process of addressing an envelope using your school address as the return address and your match school's address as the mailing address.

Hand out envelopes and give students time to fill out their own, using their name and their pen pal's name and their respective school addresses. Circulate to ensure they are doing it correctly.

Point out where the stamp would go and invite students to draw their own (remember: these small envelopes will go in the larger teacher envelope to be mailed, so they don't need real stamps). Check out the extension activity about stamps below!



### Create Your Own Stamp Designs

Teach your students about the importance of stamps with this fun assignment. Share the *Create Your Own Stamp Design* handout with your students. Invite students to share the facts they find there. Explain that stamps are designed to honor people, places, moments, and artifacts of American history and culture. Ask them: What or who will you honor with your stamp design? Invite students to draw and color their rough draft on the handout provided. Then provide each student with an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper for their final design. Consider displaying all your students' beautiful stamp designs on a classroom or hallway bulletin board. Ask each student to share the story of their stamp design on an index card and display it next to their stamp.



### Yearlong Pen Pals

Once students receive their first letters from their pen pals, they need to know how to respond and keep the correspondence going. For example, they'll need to answer their pen pals' questions. Maybe something they wrote will spark more questions, or they can relate to it in some way. As their teacher, you'll guide the correspondence (use those extra-large teacher envelopes included in your kit). Schedule pen pal letter-writing sessions regularly. For ideas throughout the year, visit [WeAreTeachers.com/USPS-Pen-Pal-Project](http://WeAreTeachers.com/USPS-Pen-Pal-Project).

### Write Thank-You Notes to Your School Community

After the excitement of getting their own "real mail," your students will want to spread the joy. Invite your students to write thank-you letters to members of your school community who help in so many ways. Begin by brainstorming as a class. Who helps make our school a wonderful place? Make a list. Hopefully, your students will have many names to suggest: the principal, librarian, parent volunteers, custodians. Invite your students to work in pairs or small groups to write one of the letters. Your students may want to illustrate their letters too! Explain that a thank-you letter must address the person clearly, say thank you, and explain what the thanks are for. Lastly, a thank-you note should express how the recipient of the letter makes you feel. When the thank-you letters are finished, have students address envelopes to the recipients and place stamps on them (ask families for donations!). Put them in a USPS collection box to be delivered back to school; it's way more fun than just dropping them in teacher boxes.