



LOW HANGING FRUIT



Reach Out to a Friend this Holiday Season

by Jeannie Standal

December is Write to a Friend Month, and the timing couldn't be better! Whether it's a holiday letter with a family update or a New Year Card with a note, receiving a personal message in the mail is such a treat, especially in the age of text messages and social media posts. Make Write to a Friend Month a classroom project for December that incorporates skills to write for a purpose, some hands-on creativity, and might help kids do a good deed. Check out these ideas to inspire students to write to a friend:

- Set up a card-making station with art supplies and allow students to make a card for a friend. Perhaps preface the activity with mini-lessons on holidays celebrated in different traditions in the United States and around the world.
- Partner with an organization to set up a letter writing project. See Links to More Learning for a couple of options to consider for an ongoing class project. To help teachers and students learn the ropes, there are often guidelines to help students produce letters that are appropriate for the cause, and keep them and their privacy safe.
- Tap into fandom culture and help students write letters to favorite authors, athletes, performers, YouTubers, or heroes sometimes feel like friends, and who knows - they might send something back!

Some might question whether letter writing is a necessary skill since we don't communicate through letters most of the time. According to Reading Rockets, it is an essential skill used in some important ways: job searches, letters of complaint or cancellation, letters to the editor, not to mention the oft forgotten thank-you note. Learning letter writing basics early makes learning more advanced letter writing easier, introduces kids to letter formatting, the differences in formal and informal language, communication skills, and handwriting. Plus, a well-written thank you will keep us all in Grandma's good graces.

Sources:

Kautzer, Kim. "11 Ways to Celebrate Write to a Friend Month." WriteShop, 2015. Accessed 12/7/2023 at <https://writeshop.com/blog/write-to-a-friend-month/>.

My Child magazine. "An Introduction to Letter Writing." Accessed 12/7/23 at

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/writing/articles/introduction-letter-writing#:~:text=Encouraging%20children%20to%20write%20letters,about%20writing%20and%20structuring%20letters.>

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LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



Operation Gratitude

Assembles care packages for deployed troops, recruit grads, veterans, wounded heroes, and first responders. Each package includes a handwritten letter from grateful volunteers. Letters from youngsters are especially meaningful.

<https://www.operationgratitude.com/volunteer/anywhere/letters/>

Letters Against Isolation

Sends handwritten letters to senior citizens around the world to "fight senior loneliness one letter at a time." There is a student sign up option. <https://www.lettersagainstisolation.com/>

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



Consult the ultimate authority on etiquette in letter writing: Emily Post.

The Emily Post Institute has kept up with the times, and is still the go-to source for hitting the right note in a letter. Check out this guide to write a letter anyone would be pleased to receive.

<https://emilypost.com/advice/writing-personal-letters>

DIGITAL TOOLS



**WORLD BOOK
ONLINE**

Use one or more databases in the [World Book Suite](#) to explore articles, curriculum standards, images, and more for a myriad of topics. Each database offers a comprehensive article on Indigenous peoples of the Americas with links to related information.

