

# Manners Matter

Activity Guide  
Ages 9 to 12

## The Write Touch

### The Right Foot

There are as many types of letters as there are ways to write them.

Some of the most popular kinds are thank-you letters, birthday greetings, get-well notes, and expres-

sions of sympathy. But people also write letters to get a job, to apply to a school, to complain about something, or to request a new policy or law. Most kinds of letters have the same components: a return address, a date, a greeting or salutation, a body, a closing, and a signature. Your tone and style will vary, depending on whom you're writing to and how well you know that person.



### Civil Action

Write at least five different kinds of letters to five different people. If possible, vary your format. For example, write some by hand on stationery and type or compose a few on the computer. You may even wish to send a few letters by e-mail. Ask your helper if you need advice.

Make sure you proofread your letters for errors. Check the recipient's address. Also make sure you've used the correct amount of postage.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Spell the person's name correctly and use a title, if appropriate (such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Dr., Judge, etc.). Ask your helper if you're unsure of how to address someone.

### Life Skill

- Communication

### Project Skill

- Writing letters

### Objective

- Participant writes letters for a variety of purposes and occasions to a variety of people.

### Success Indicators

- Participant demonstrates an understanding of correspondence etiquette in a variety of letters.

### Eti-Kit

- Practice notepad
- Stationery
- Ballpoint pen
- Computer and printer paper
- Internet access (optional)
- Stamps
- Telephone book or family address book

### Courtesy Corner

- Thank-you notes aren't limited to people who give you gifts. A letter of thanks is appropriate when you have gone to someone's house for dinner, after a job interview or sales call, or when someone has helped you with a project or task.

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- Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Try to write the way you would say something in person. Use your own style.
- Make your letter neat and legible.
- A few suggested closings, in order of most to least formal, are: Respectfully or Respectfully yours (government officials, clergy); Very truly yours (formal letters); Sincerely and Sincerely yours (business letters); Best regards (informal, friendly); and Love (family and close friends).
- Preprinted thank-you cards are acceptable only with a personal, handwritten note inside.
- Make sure your stationery matches the tone of your letter.

## Extra Polish

Sometimes a letter can go beyond communicating with the person you are writing. One example of this is a letter to the editor of your school or community newspaper. Though you address your letter to the editor, if it is published, you can reach potentially every person who reads that newspaper. Another type of letter that can have multiple impacts is a letter to a congressman or local politician. If that elected official acts on your letter, it can affect many people. Read your local newspaper for a week or two, and look for issues that interest you. Write a letter to the editor or elected official about an important story or issue. Remember, a letter doesn't have to be a request or complaint. You might want simply to thank a person for his or her actions.

## Finishing School

### Share

- What kinds of letters did you write?
- At what times do you think a handwritten letter would be more appropriate and effective than a typed one?



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## **Process**

- How can letter-writing make you a better friend, student, or citizen?
- How did you decide how to address people you didn't know personally?
- At what times would a letter be better than a phone call or visit? Why?

## **Generalize**

- What other letters, if any, have you written before?
- In what other ways have you written something instead of saying it orally?

## **Apply**

- How can writing letters regularly improve your communication skills?