

## PREPARING A PERSONAL LETTER

### Student/Class Goal

Students want to share their experiences and keep in touch with family and friends locally or from their native country.

### Outcome *(lesson objective)*

Students will identify the parts and format of a personal (friendly) letter then write a letter using the appropriate format with proper spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar.

### Time Frame

Two 45 minute sessions

### Standard *Convey Ideas in Writing*

### NRS EFL 2-4

| Prewriting                 | Benchmarks      | Drafting             | Benchmarks       | Editing and Revising | Benchmarks        |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Topic, purpose, & audience | 2.1, 3.1, 4.1   | Organize writing     | 2.10, 3.10       | Reread & revise      | 2.18, 3.18, 4.19  |
| Writing for purpose        | 2.2, 3.2, 4.2   | Sentences/paragraphs | 2.11, 3.11, 4.12 | Proofread            | 2.19, 3.19, 4.20  |
| Writing for various tasks  | 2.3, 3.3, 4.3   | Descriptive language | 2.12, 4.13       | Feedback from others | 2.20, 3.20, 4.21  |
| Generate ideas             | 2.4, 3.4, 4.4   | Sentence structure   | 2.13, 3.13, 4.14 | Checklists & rubrics | 2.21, 3.21, 4.22  |
| Main idea/thesis           | 2.5, 3.5, 4.5   | Spelling             | 2.14, 3.14, 4.15 | <b>Publishing</b>    | <b>Benchmarks</b> |
| Research                   |                 | Punctuation          | 2.15, 3.15, 4.16 | Technology           |                   |
| Plagiarism                 |                 | Capitalization       | 2.16, 3.16, 4.17 | Publication          | 1.23, 2.23        |
| Sources                    |                 | Parts of speech      | 2.17, 3.17, 4.18 |                      |                   |
| Organize ideas             | 2.8, 3.8, 4.8   |                      |                  |                      |                   |
| Organizational pattern     | 2.9, 4.10, 5.10 |                      |                  |                      |                   |

### Materials

Examples of Personal Letters  
*Sample Personal Letter* Handout/Overhead  
*Parts of a Personal Letter* Handout  
*Personal Letter* Template  
*Personal Letter Checklist*

### Learner Prior Knowledge

*Letter Writing Basics* on writing business letters could precede this lesson. The student's level of proficiency in their native language affects acquisition of a second language, remember to always build their new learning on their existing skill base.

### Instructional Activities

Step 1 - Prior to class, collect examples of various kinds of personal letters and have students bring any to share. Use the *Sample Personal Letter* handout/overhead. Make overheads or copies for small groups to examine.

**TEACHER NOTE** Excellent historical documents might include: [Congratulations from Edward Everett to Abraham Lincoln for the Gettysburg Address](#), [Theodore Roosevelt Writes to His Son](#), or [The Great Chicago Fire](#).

Begin by discussing students' personal experiences with letter writing. What kinds of letters have they received or written? To whom do you send letters and who sends letters to you? How many students keep the letters and why? Where can we find contemporary letters? (editorials and magazines)

Together define a personal (friendly) letter and present examples to read over.

Step 2 - Encourage discussion about the conventions or format of these letters. Write these on the board as discussed.

1. Can you figure out the purpose of the letter?
2. Do you recognize who wrote or received the letter? Could you locate the name of the sender? (expectation that name of sender will appear at the end of the text – **(5) signature**)
3. Does each letter have a **(2) greeting** or salutation? (Dear xxx, )
4. Do any letters show where they were sent from? (heading contains return address) Do any show where they are being sent? (inside address not generally included in friendly letter) Are the addresses complete and easy to find? Why is the address only in some letters?
5. How many letters contain the date? Why is the date included? (could be part of **(1) heading**)
6. How is the letter formatted? (block or indented **(3) body**)
7. Does the letter have a **(4) closing**? (Sincerely,)

**TEACHER NOTE** Decide ahead of time or generate with class which format you will be using. Several examples are given, but are not considered the only way to write letters. Posters can also be purchased at local teacher supply stores and can be displayed in the classroom for easy reference.

Step 3 - Go over the parts of a personal letter using the handout *Parts of a Personal Letter*, explaining the terminology and what should be included.

Step 4 - Students decide the purpose and who they would like to write their friendly letter to. If they have trouble deciding, suggest these topics.

ESOL Topic: Write to someone in your native country about your ESOL class.

ABLE Topic: Write to a family member you haven't seen in awhile about your ABLE class.

Before writing, students may want to make some notes about the information they want to include in their letter. Students have an incentive to spell correctly, write in complete sentences and use proper grammar and punctuation. They may choose to use the *Personal Letter Template* to write their draft letter.

Step 5 - Since these are personal letters, please use discretion to protect the privacy of your students. Peer editing can be done using the *Personal Letter Checklist* to evaluate format and grammatical conventions.

Submit revisions to the teacher; photocopy the letters (for assessment purposes) prior to mailing them.

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*

Personal Letter

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*Not yet completed.*

**Next Steps**

**Technology Integration**

Email messages could be presented as another way to send a letter.

Gettysburg Address <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trt032.html>

Theodore Roosevelt Writes to His Son <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm014.html>

The Great Chicago Fire <http://www.chicagohs.org/fire/witnesses/justin.html>

**Purposeful/Transparent**

Students will be able to see the value of letter writing as a means of communication.

**Contextual**

After writing personal letters, students will relate the skill of letter writing to the similar skills of writing e-mails and business letters.

**Building Expertise**

Students are building a repertoire of skills to be used in their daily lives, some of which could enhance their employment skills while others enhance their communication to family and friends.

March 3, 2005

Dear Sandra,

Maybe I won't need to go to heaven now that I live in Winter Park! Everything so far has been fine, especially the weather. If this keeps up, it may get monotonous, but I think I can stand it!

My address is 1515 Parkwood Drive. The ZIP Code is 44122. Please encourage all in our group to write me. I miss you more than you may believe.

Write soon and tell me what you do, where you go and all about school.

Sincerely,

Mary Jones

**(1) Heading** This includes the address, line by line, with the last line being the date. Skip a line after the heading.

1515 Parkwood Drive  
Winter Park, OH 44122  
March 3, 2005

**(2) Salutation or Greeting** Always ends with a comma. The greeting may be formal, beginning word "dear" and using the person's given name or relationship or it may be informal if appropriate.

Dear Sandra,

**(3) Body** Also known as the main text and includes the message you want to write. Normally the beginning of paragraphs as indented, but can also be block. If not indented, skip a space between paragraphs. Skip one to three spaces for the signature line.

Maybe I won't need to go to heaven now that I live in Winter Park! Everything so far has been fine, especially the weather. If this keeps up, it may get monotonous, but I think I can stand it!

My address is 1515 Parkwood Drive. The ZIP Code is 44122. Please encourage all in our group to write me. I miss you more than you may believe.

Write soon and tell me what you do, where you go and all about school.

**(4) Complimentary Closing** A short expression is always a few words on a single line and ends with a comma. If the letter is quite informal, you may omit the signature line as long as you sign the letter.

Sincerely,

**(5) Signature** Type or print your name with the handwritten signature above this line and below the close.

Mary Jones

**(6) Postscript** If your letter contains a postscript, begin it with P.S. and end it with your initials. Skip a line after the signature line to begin the postscript

**PLANNING FORM FOR A PERSONAL LETTER**

----- (your address)

----- (city, state, zip)

----- (current date)

----- (salutation)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

----- (closing)

----- (your signature)

## Personal Letter Checklist

Check the appropriate box after reading your partner's letter.

|  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>FORMAT</b>  |                          |                          |
| Is there a heading?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the heading contain the address and the date?       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is there a greeting?                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the greeting have a comma?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the body have paragraphs?                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are the paragraphs _____ indented or _____ block style?  |                          |                          |
| Is there a closing?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the closing have a comma?                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is there a signature?                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>GRAMMAR</b>   |                          |                          |
| Is there a period or question mark after every sentence? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do sentences start with a capital letter?                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Circle any words that might need checked for spelling    |                          |                          |

**Note** Grammar issues can be addressed in individual conferences with teacher.

Comments

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Peer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

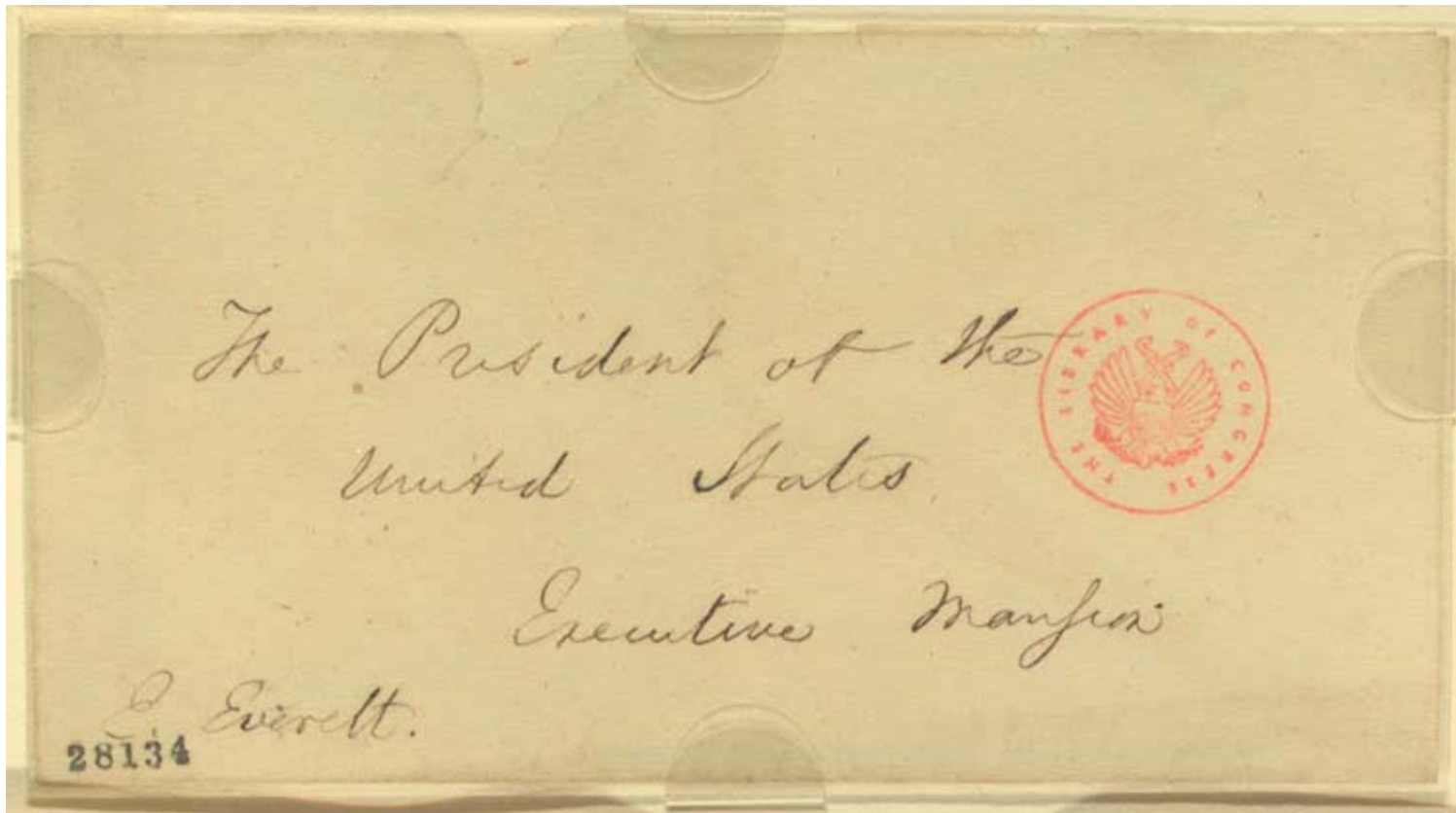
simplicity & appropriateness, at  
the consecration of the Cemetery. I  
should be glad, if I could flatter  
myself that I came as near to  
the central idea of the occasion,  
in two hours, as you did in  
two minutes. My son who  
parted from me at Baltimore  
& my daughter, concur in this  
sentiment.

I remain, dear Sir, most  
respectfully Yours,

Edward Everett.

I hope your anxiety for your  
child was relieved or your an-

rival.



**Congratulations from Edward Everett to Abraham Lincoln for the Gettysburg Address**

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trt032.html>