



Teachers Guide to Fun Letter Writing

Introduction

Letter writing is a powerful vehicle for engaging students in authentic writing. The skills and techniques of writing are best learned when children are actually engaged in the process. In order to communicate effectively, children must be able to reflect on their own experiences, and organize and convey their thoughts in a clear concise manner. The satisfying part of writing to friends, relatives and pen pals is that students will often receive letters in return.

This teachers guide includes suggestions and strategies to help your students become better letter writers, and to maximize their **Alpha's Pen Pal** experience.

It includes: *Parts of a Friendly Letter*, *Steps to Writing a Friendly Letter*, *Addressing an Envelope*, extended activities and related literature.

Letter Writing Expectations

- read and discuss friendly letters
- discuss audience and purpose for letter writing
- identify the five main parts of a friendly letter and describe their functions
- brainstorm what to include in a letter
- write a friendly letter using the accepted format
- address an envelope using the accepted format
- revise, edit and proofread friendly letter

Introductory Activities

- introduce letter writing lesson with a read-aloud from one of the following literature books:
 - *The Jolly Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
 - *Dear Peter Rabbit* by Alma Flor Ada
 - *Yours Truly, Goldilocks* by Alma Flor Ada
 - *Dear Phoebe* by Sue Alexander

OR

- introduce letter writing with a letter written by the teacher on chart paper for the students to read, e.g. morning message

Teaching Strategies

- after reading and/or listening to letters (see above), ask students “WHOM” the letter was written to (audience) and “WHY” the letter was written (purpose)
- ask students how many have written letters before, why they choose to write letters, and if they have ever received letters
- tell students that they will be corresponding with another class through the **Alpha's Pen Pal** program
- using an overhead projector, model writing a class letter with students on the **Pen Pals** letterhead. Take this opportunity to introduce students to letter writing with an authentic purpose (e.g. writing to their pen pal class)
- discuss and highlight the five main parts of a friendly letter through modeling (see *Parts of a Friendly Letter*)
- brainstorm with students things that they can write about; for example:
 - information about themselves
 - things happening at school/outside school
 - books they have read
 - favourite movies and TV shows
 - interests/hobbies
 - questions for their pen pals

This teachers guide was written by Mary Trantos Salvarinas and Daniel Wu, teachers with the York Region District Board of Education.

Junior Extensions and Integration to Letter Writing

- introduce and discuss *Steps to Writing a Friendly Letter* to the class
- introduce addressing an envelope format (see *Addressing an Envelope*)
- demonstrate (with the **Pen Pals** envelope) how to fold letter so it fits neatly into the envelope
- students start writing the draft of first letter to their new pen pals following the first four *Steps to Writing a Friendly Letter*
- review draft letters with students and then hand out **Pen Pal** letterhead. Students re-write a final copy of their letter on the letterhead

Primary Extensions and Integration to Letter Writing

- create a postal system in the classroom with a class mailbox – students write to each other and an assigned letter carrier delivers the mail once a week
- introduce postcard writing to the students
- create a letter writing centre in the class so students can access a variety of paper types and items to decorate their letter with (e.g. stickers, stamps)
- show students how to send e-mails to their pen pals (see *Alpha's Key Pals* section)

- introduce other forms of letter writing: faxes, memos, e-mails, thank-you letters, invitations, business letters
- introduce the postscript (P.S.) at the bottom under your signature (when the writer finishes a letter and then remembers something they forgot to say)
- research Canada's postal system
- collect stamps in the class and share
- design a new stamp or series of stamps for Canada Post
- introduce paper making – students can create own paper to write on
- introduce techniques to decorate paper (e.g. paper marbling)
- show students how to send e-mails to their pen pals (see *Alpha's Key Pals* section)

Alpha's Key Pals

Are you and your partner **Pen Pals** class interested in becoming *Alpha's Key Pals* too? Your students can try sending e-mail letters in a fun and easy way. Go to **kidsworld's** web site www.kidsworld-online.com and click on the **Alpha** icon. When the **Alpha** web page appears, select "Send an **Alpha** mail to a friend." Follow the step-by-step prompts, and before you know it, you're on the information super highway!

Addressing an envelope

Return Address of Sender
Write the name, address and postal code of the sender.

Ms. Valerie Smith
1234 Main Street
Unionville, ON L1R 4M5

Ms. Evelyn Jones
567 Hill Top Drive,
Richmond, BC V5T 2J7

Postage Stamp



Receiver of Letter
Write the name, address and postal code of the receiver.

Parts of a Friendly Letter

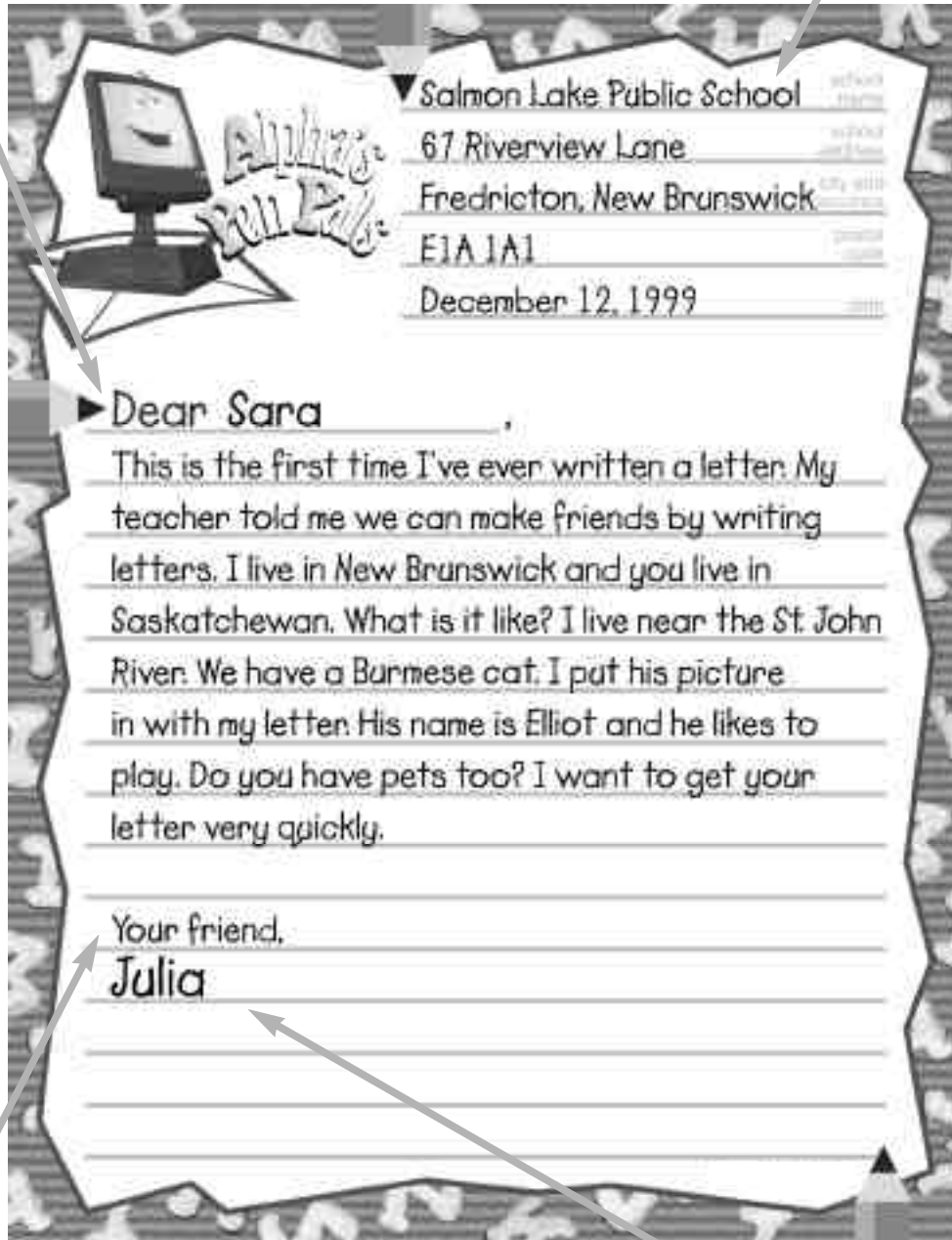
There are five parts to a friendly letter.
The following exemplar may be used as a model for your students.

Salutation or Greeting

Start with the word Dear, then the person's name, followed by a comma.

Heading

Includes your address and the date. (Date only for Grade 2)



Body

This contains your thoughts and ideas.

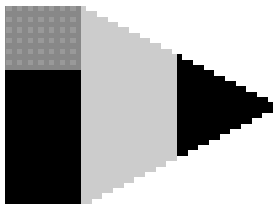
Closing

This should include words like: Sincerely, Love, See you soon. Put a comma after your closing.

Signature

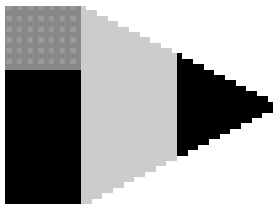
Sign your name.

Alpha's Guide to Writing a Friendly Letter



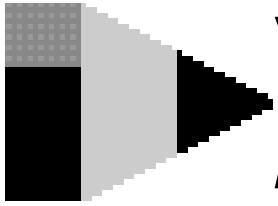
1

Think or talk about what you would like to write about.



2

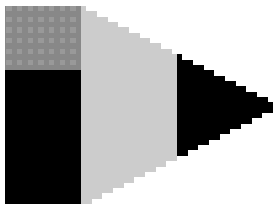
Begin writing. Start with one idea (e.g. your new pet) and add others.



3

After you have finished, go back and re-read your letter.

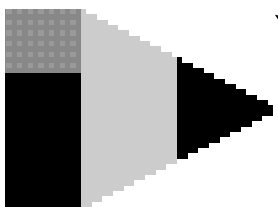
- Is it clear?
- Does it make sense?
- Have you said what you wanted to say?
- Is it interesting?



4

Edit your work. Re-read your letter and check for:

- spelling
- punctuation
- capitals
- grammar



5

Re-write a final copy of your letter.

