


# LETTERS are wonderful to receive

English curriculum activities on a letter writing theme for levels 2-4 brought to you by:



**LETTERS HAVE SO MANY USES!**

- ASKING PEOPLE FOR INFORMATION
- PARTY INVITATION
- THANKING PEOPLE
- SHARING THOUGHTS WITH FRIENDS
- BUSINESS LETTERS
- APPLYING FOR A JOB



- As a homework assignment have each student run a family mail count during a period of a week to find out:
  - which member of the family receives the most mail?
  - how many of each specific item is received?
  - which mail is the first read?
  - which mail is not read carefully?
  - which mail do family members like receiving most and why do they like receiving this type of mail?

## COMMUNICATING WITH EACH OTHER

- What do students think is meant by communication or communicating with each other? Discuss. What does the dictionary say that *communicate* means?
- In groups, have students brainstorm a large list of all the different ways that people can communicate with each other.

Did their list include the following?

- email
- texting
- talking face-to-face
- video conference
- send a pdf
- letters
- cards
- faxing
- audio conference
- phone calls

- Can the students say what each method of communication is best for – when would people use them and what for? Write short statements, **eg**

- I often text mum to let her know I have arrived safely
- a fax is good for sending a form that needs to be filled in
- a phone lets us talk directly with people and is often used just for a catch-up or a chat
- an email lets us send a short message and often is used when we want a reply
- audio and video conferences allow people all around the country and the world to communicate with each other without travelling
- I write letters to thank my aunties for their birthday and Christmas presents.



phone



fax



email

## THINKING ABOUT LETTERS

- Have each student write a short report to answer the following questions:
  - when did they last write a letter and to whom?
  - when did they last receive a letter and from whom?
  - when did they last receive or send a post card?
  - how do they feel when they receive a letter from a family member such as a cousin or aunt?
- Share answers with the class. Can the students say why receiving a friendly letter or a post card is often so much better than receiving a text message or a phone call? Develop the idea that as a letter is not instant, people can show that they care about someone by putting in that extra effort to sit down and write the letter.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF LETTERS

- Can the students list times when a letter would be the best form of communication? Can they say why? **eg**
  - a letter of invitation to a birthday party is always a pleasure to receive and serves as a reminder.
- Challenge students to list all the times that it would be best to write a letter, **eg**
  - send a letter or postcard to a friend when on holiday
  - send a letter to answer an advertisement for an after-school job
  - to thank a visitor who came to talk to the class or to get information for a school project.
- Have students ask family members when they use letters as their chosen form of communication. Find out why they chose to send the letter and the advantages that the letter has. Report back and share results.
- Introduce students to the idea that letters can be divided into two main styles that are quite different – formal and informal letters, **eg**
  - requesting information for a school project – formal
  - a letter to a friend or a family member – informal.
- Can the students list other examples of each type?



text

## WHAT'S IN OUR MAIL BOX?

- Find out how many students receive their mail at home and how many collect it from a post office box.
- Brainstorm and list all the different types of mail that they receive at home, **eg**
  - letters
  - magazines
  - unaddressed circulars
  - parcels
  - postcards
  - bills

# LETTERS are great fun to write

## DIFFERENT LETTERS – DIFFERENT STYLES

- Focus on requesting information as one common type of a formal letter. Tell students that there are certain ways that we can write them to help us get the best possible result. This is known as the style of the letter.
- What do they consider would be very important? **eg**
  - *making our request politely*
  - *taking care with the setting out (look) of the letter.*
- Have students interview the office staff and/or Principal to find out if your school has a particular style for formal letters that leave the school. Ask why they have this style. Do they have a letterhead and why is a letterhead commonly used?
- Download a copy of a formal letter requesting material at: [www.teachingonline.org/letters.html](http://www.teachingonline.org/letters.html)  
Photocopy and distribute the letter to the class. Through discussion have students take particular note of the following:
  - *where one or more line spacings occur*
  - *the use of a formal or semi-formal greeting (no hi or hello)*
  - *a brief and polite opening paragraph that tells the reader exactly what is being requested*
  - *a brief explanation as to why you are making this request (adds interest to the letter)*
  - *final paragraph thanking the person for considering the request*
  - *'Yours sincerely,' is normally used followed by a personal signature (in ink) then leave a line and type name.*
  - *students should not decorate formal letters*
  - *find out the correct name and title of the person you are writing to if you can – if not use the Dear Sir/Madam.*
- Tell students that having no spelling mistakes is regarded as being very important and shows the writer has taken care.
- If a reply by post is wanted, it is polite to include a stamped addressed envelope.
- Brainstorm a list of 'real topics' that students can use to write formal letters, **eg**
  - *to get an after-school job*
  - *to ask for information for a school project*
  - *a letter to a newspaper highlighting a community concern.*



## THE FUN OF WRITING INFORMAL LETTERS

- Remind students of the second type of letters – informal. Tell them that these are the really fun ones to write and they let us really show our personality and writing skills. Develop the idea that these are letters of friendship.
- Tell students that although they could write informal letters on a word processor, it is better to use their own handwriting to give them a personal touch. Many informal letters are also decorated with drawings to brighten them up.
- Introduce the idea that informal letters are mostly written to people we know well. What do students think we can use informal letters for? **eg**
  - *tell people what we have been doing lately*
  - *invite them to a birthday party or picnic*
  - *invite a friend to stay over the holidays.*
- Have students share their reactions when someone tells them they are doing a good job or thanks them for something they have given them or done for them. Why do they think that if this takes the form of a thank you letter, it will be even more special? **eg**
  - *they can keep it to read it again and again and feel good.*
- Each student writes a list of special people who have done something special for them during the year, **eg**
  - *a sports coach*                      - *a relation or family friend*
  - *their teacher*                      - *members of their family*
- Have students write a series of informal letters that can be sent to these people as an end-of-year project.
- Remind students that as a holiday project they should write thank you letters to everyone who sent them a Christmas present as this will mean much more than a quick text, email or phone call.
- Students may stay with families or friends over the summer holidays. Use this writing opportunity to have students write 'thank you for the wonderful stay' letters when they return to school in 2007.