

The Power of the Pen

Have you ever really wanted to “state your case” or felt as if your voice hasn’t been heard? Letter writing is a powerful way to express concerns: more tangible than a phone call or an email, less extreme than an attorney file; it’s a throwback to when citizens communicated their concerns using the power of the pen.

For middle school students, letter-writing is even more valuable. You’re learning to write persuasively in the classroom, and using evidence to support your assertions. You are also full of opinions about the injustices in your school, community, and world. So show that the pen really is mightier than the sword with this fun writing exercise!

What You Do:

- First, what issues do you care about that you would like to change. Is it the quality of the cafeteria food? The amount of homework you receive? Or something more broad, such as animal testing or pollution?
- After you've found your cause, think about to whom address your letter. Is it the school principal? The mayor of your town? Your local congressperson?
- Gather the facts. Do some research into the issue and find out as much as you can about the pros and cons. Knowing the other side of the issue will give you an extra leg up in your argument.
- Now's the time to state your case. Remember, writing a good persuasive letter means backing up your opinions with solid evidence. Why is the issue a problem? Who else is affected? What are the experts saying? What do your friends think? Acknowledge the other side of the issue. For example, you could write, “I understand improving the quality and variety of the cafeteria food may be more expensive for the school system.” Then provide your counterargument: “However, I believe that healthy and happy students are worth the extra cost.”
- Once you've finished your letter, proofread it for spelling errors, grammatical structure, and use of paragraphs. Include your name and address, and send it on its way!

Rough Draft due date_____

Final Copy_____