



WRITING TIPS FOR PEN PAL

NOT SURE WHAT TO WRITE?

We invite you to correspond with the student you have chosen as your pen pal to foster meaningful connections and gain insight into their lives and families. You may write up to four times per year, offering encouragement and support as they pursue their education and personal growth.

To promote positive and effective communication between donors, sponsors, and students, we provide guidelines to assist you in writing thoughtful and engaging letters. Each time you write, you are welcome to select from suggested topics to help facilitate your conversation.

Please keep your messages brief, as many students are in the process of learning English as a second language. Your words have the power to inspire and uplift them on their journey.

Below are specific tips for writing to your sponsored student.

What should I write about?

- Share a little about your family—your children, parents, siblings, or cousins.
 - You can include their names and ages.
 - Feel free to share fun or meaningful stories that are appropriate for your student’s age.
- Talk about your favorite hobbies, activities, or sports you enjoy in your free time.
- Share memories from your childhood—maybe a funny story or a favorite experience.
- Describe what you do for work, or if you're a student, what you're currently learning.
- Paint a picture of where you live! Mention the weather, unique features of your town or city, or any interesting facts about your state.

How can I encourage my Pen Pal Student

- Let them know you’re grateful for them and share why they are special to you.
- Show that you care about their well-being and believe in their bright future.
- Encourage them to be kind, peaceful, and loving in their words and actions.
- Inspire them to live with purpose and make the most of their talents and opportunities.
- Motivate them to give back and make a difference in their community.
- Celebrate their achievements and let them know you’re proud of their efforts.
- Remind them of the value of education and how it can shape their future.
- Encourage them to stay focused on their studies and always do their best in school.



- Teach them the importance of respecting and honoring their elders

As a Christian How can I share my faith and encourage my Pen Pal's Faith?

- Share your personal relationship with Jesus and how it has shaped your life.
- Remind them that Jesus offers hope and a future, no matter their circumstances.
- Ask if they have any prayer requests and share your own, fostering a meaningful connection.
- Let them know that you pray for them regularly and specifically.
- Share your faith journey, including challenges and lessons that have strengthened your trust in God.
- Encourage them by reminding them that Jesus cares deeply for them and invites them to seek Him.
- Inspire them to spend time in prayer and reading the Bible each day.
- Emphasize the importance of being part of a faith community and how the church can provide support and encouragement.
- Share meaningful Bible verses and consider including notecards with your favorite scriptures for them to keep and reflect on.

What Questions should I ask my Pen pal student

Building a strong connection with your sponsored student starts with thoughtful and engaging questions. Here are some ideas to help foster meaningful conversations:

- What is your favorite subject in school, and why do you enjoy it?
- What are you currently learning at school and church?
- Do you have a favorite Bible verse or Bible story? What do you like about it?
- How can I pray for you?
- What do you enjoy doing outside of school, such as sports, games, or hobbies?
- Can you tell me about your family? What are your parents' or guardians' and siblings' names?
- What responsibilities or chores do you have at home?
- What is your favorite food or meal?
- What are your dreams for the future? What would you like to do after finishing school?

These questions can help create a meaningful dialogue while showing your student that you care about their life, interests, and future.



What should I avoid in my letter(s)?

When writing to your pen pal, it's important to be mindful of cultural differences and avoid topics that could cause discomfort or create unintended expectations. Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Do Not Share Personal Contact Information**
 - Avoid sharing your phone number, email, home address, or social media accounts.
 - Do not attempt to connect with your pen pal outside of the approved letter-writing process.
 - This policy is in place to protect both you and your pen pal from confusion or unintended situations.
- **Avoid Sensitive Topics**
 - Do not ask about the Rwandan Genocide or their ethnic background.
 - Avoid discussing politics (whether in Rwanda, the U.S., or any other country), as these topics may be complex and sensitive.
- **Refrain from Making Promises**
 - Life circumstances can change, so please do not promise financial support, future visits, or anything you may not be able to fulfill.
- **Do Not Suggest They Visit You or the U.S.**
 - In Rwandan culture, suggesting a visit may be interpreted as a promise to sponsor their travel. Instead, focus on encouraging them in their education and future within their community.
- **Be Sensitive About Material Possessions**
 - Many pen pals come from modest backgrounds, so avoid discussing wealth, expensive items, or lifestyle differences that may create feelings of comparison.
- **Use Clear and Simple Language**
 - Avoid slang, idioms, or expressions that may be difficult to translate or understand.
- **Avoid Referring to Pets as Family Members**
 - In Rwandan culture, animals are generally not regarded as family members in the same way they are in some Western cultures. To prevent confusion, keep pet references simple.

By following these guidelines, you can create a meaningful and respectful friendship through your letters while honoring cultural differences.