

Persuasive Writing: Tips to Help Get Started

Many people find it difficult to begin writing a letter. To make it easier, break your letter down into sections to get started. The first draft doesn't have to be perfect, just start with getting your ideas down on paper.

Use this step-by-step guide to help you start writing your letter!



1. Open the letter with a salutation.

- When writing to an elected official, use “Honorable,” before the person’s official title and full name. When writing to an official who does not hold elected office, use “Dear,” their title, and full name.

2. Introduce yourself.

- Your reader wants to know who is writing the letter. Tell a little bit about yourself. The information you provide in your introduction should be relevant to the issue you’re writing about.

3. Explain why you’re writing the letter.

- State why you’re concerned about an issue or pending policy decision. If you’re writing a positive letter, state why you’re pleased.

4. Summarize the issue as you understand it.

- Describe the issue in detail and the problems you see. This gives your reader an opportunity to understand your perspective and see the issue from a different point of view.

5. Tell how the issue affects you.

- Describe your experience. Explain to your reader how this pending decision or issue affects your life. If it affects others in your community, describe how.

6. Ask for the change you want.

- Be clear and direct about what you'd like the reader to do in response to your letter. The reader should not have to guess what you're asking for.

7. Describe how the change you want would affect you and others.

- Explain how the change you are asking for will affect you and your community. This information is as important as describing the issue. Your reader needs to know how you and other members of the community will benefit from the action taken.

8. Offer to help.

- If you have time and energy, offer to participate in the decision-making process. Citizen participation in policy development and decision-making is crucial if the needs of the community are to be completely understood before a decision is made.

9. Thank the reader.

- Make sure to thank the reader of your letter for their time and attention. Even if the reader disagrees with your position, it is important to thank them for considering your thoughts. This will make them more receptive to future letters you may wish to write.

10. Sign your letter.

- Make sure to include your address and other contact information if you want a response.