

How to Write a Friendly Letter

Left Margin

Right Margin

The heading should be 1/2 to 2/3 distance from the left margin

534 Kipling Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 64525

September 19, 1950

Heading

Dear Anne, } Greeting

In a friendly letter, paragraphs are indented. If typing the letter, indent five spaces. The first paragraph usually contains some kind of greeting as well as a reference to the receiver's last letter, telephone call, etc. For example:

Salutations! I trust this letter still finds you doing well. I was so happy to have received your last letter. Thanks so much for writing. How's your dog, Harvey, doing? Have you taught him any new tricks?

The next paragraph (or paragraphs) should express the purpose of your letter and might contain answers to which the receiver previously asked. Your letter might also contain information about you, your family, your friends, various activities, and/or any events that have taken place since you wrote last. You may want to place an invitation for a visit here, and you may want to thank the person for something, such as a gift, a kind word, etc. For example:

I have something I want to share with you. We have a kitten! Her name is Mittens and she sleeps with me at the foot of my bed. Dad doesn't care much for cats, but Mom and I think she's just darling. I hold her often and she cuddles around my neck and purrs. I often play with her and she wants to follow me everywhere I go.

The last paragraph sums up the topic of your letter and asks the reader to reply.

Aren't pets fun? I just love my kitty. I'm looking forward to your next letter.

Closing } Sincerely,

Signature } [Sign your name underneath]

Especially when typing, but even when writing it is a good practice to have margins of at least 1/2 inch on all four sides of your letter: top, bottom, right, and left. The following is a sample of a real friendly letter:

Tianjin Foreign Languages High School
11 Nankou Lu, Hebei District
Tianjin 300230
PR China

June 3, 2002

Dear Dad,

How are you? I trust you are well. Are you putting in a garden this year?

We seem to be fine here, except for the occasional cold. I just got over one. I think it was one of the worst colds I've had in a while. I'd rather have a cold, though, than have the pukes.

This past weekend we went to Badaling and climbed the great wall. It was the second time for me, but the first time for Patrick. He was so excited. He waited and waited for that moment of being able to see and finally to stand on that long, stone dragon. I again looked out from between its turrets across the vast, northern, mountain range. This time however, I didn't experience the sad, melancholy feelings that I have felt before. Instead, this time, I longed for the mountains, and to be with the people who live there. Here and there, small, traditional Chinese homes still dot the hollows of those hills. In the valleys below stretch fields of wheat, corn, and vegetables mingled with fishponds and herds of sheep and goats. The mountains have very few trees, as the sides are so steep and rocky. Cedars struggle for survival there, but the mountains' main garment is a kind of sagebrush. I guess I'll never get the mountains out of my heart. No matter where I go or what I do. I think of them and the people who dwell there. The Chinese have a saying, "Falling leaves always return to their roots." I believe my roots are in the mountains, but as of yet, I've had no opportunity to return there.

I've seen pictures of Inner Mongolia. There are beautiful pasture fields there with clear running streams and hills covered with trees and forests. Nomads tend flocks of sheep and goats on horseback and live as they have for thousands of years. When I see this kind of countryside, I am reminded of life back home on the mountains, especially my childhood.

I often think of the horses we had and all the fun we enjoyed with them. I can almost feel the cool air as it rushes past me in my memory. The horse and I are racing across the long, green fields and we are laughing together all the way. I am reminded of how someone said God made the horse. They said He picked up some dirt, blew it into the air, and there stood the horse. Do you know what else I miss? I miss having a horse. There's something special about a horse. I still remember how my horse, Juno, would follow me around and rub his head on my shoulder. Sometimes I would lay on his back while he grazed in the yard.

There are many kinds of work that we did as children, which I hated at the time, like pulling weeds, hilling potatoes, splitting wood, and fixing fence. Now, I miss those things, and have realized too late that those are some of the best and most enjoyable kinds of work that a man can do. I have sat in my little office at the big bank and have suddenly remembered the fragrance of fresh-cut maple, the crack of the splitting mall, the feeling of fresh, cool, soft, garden dirt, and the brilliant rays of golden sunshine piercing through the forest canopy.

Now, I stand each day before many classes of Chinese children. I watch their lovely faces closely. Each one is so precious. Each one is so unique. And as I stand before them I realize the great responsibility that I have, because they watch me closely, too. How I do and how I say will shape their thinking about many things; such as about myself, about America, about the world, even about God. I sometimes shudder at the thought of it. I want to be a careful teacher and a good ambassador, causing no disappointment in any way.

And Dad...just one more thing. If you go fishing, please catch one for me.

With love from your son,

Jonathan