



THE
Handwritten
Letter Project

How To BE
A HERO

for kids

AND MAKE
SOMEONE'S DAY

BY MELANI DIZON

Introduction

How much do you LOVE getting handwritten notes in the mail?

Whether it's an invite to a birthday party, a note from your grandmother with three crumpled-up dollar bills in it, or a postcard from your crazy aunt who travels the world for work, getting notes addressed to you is deliciously sweet, right?

Well, I love getting handwritten notes in the mail so much that I decided that sending one off every day would be a really cool thing.

So I did it.

I called people out for being awesome every chance I got. And it felt really good.

That's because when you call someone out for being awesome, you have the power to make their day.

Imagine if you could become the hero to someone when they least expect it.

Imagine the look on their face if they got a card from you telling them how much you appreciate them and love them.

And then think for a moment about how that would impact the rest of their day.

Well, you can be that hero simply by putting pen to paper.

And that's what this book is all about.

In this book, I share simple tips for how to write an awesome letter to everyone, from a family member to your favorite famous person.

I offer some starters, example letters, and fill-in-the-blank templates to get your wheels turning and make this whole letter-writing gig as easy as can be.

Plus, to your parents' and teachers' surprise and delight, you'll become a better and more skilled writer without even having to work at it.

Here's to being a superhero and making someone's day!

Xo,

Melani

How to Write Your Letters

Letter writing is meant to be fun. So there aren't a lot of rules here. As long as your letter-getter can read your writing, they aren't going to care about anything else.

Actually, that's a lie. I can't tell you how many letters my daughter has sent that she forgot to sign. People do care about that! So always give yourself the credit you deserve by signing your name. If you want it to be super awesome, also make sure the following five elements are in your letter. Beyond that, just write from your heart.

5 Parts of a Superhero-Level Letter

The Greeting – You could say, “Dear Mom” or “Hello Jane.” Just be sure to put a comma after it.

The Date – My mom (still!) gets mad at me when I don't put dates on my letters. People like to keep good letters, which yours will definitely be, so include a date, and they'll never have to wonder, “What year was this?”

The Body – This is the heart of your letter. Make your case for their awesomeness here. You can get ideas from the starters, example letters, or fill-in-the-blank templates I share.

But here's the deal with the template: if you don't want it or need it, don't use it. It's there just to get your wheels turning. You're smart and creative and have enough awesomeness pouring out of you to write a fabulous letter all on your own. Besides, how will you become a better writer if you just copy what I wrote?

I like to include the templates for the times when you get stuck. Most of my students like starting with a template because it sparks other ideas for them. So, use them as a guide if you'd like, but put your own spin on them. You're the superhero, remember!

The Closing – You could say, “Sincerely,” or “Cheers,” or “Love,” and then add the comma and your name. You could also add your email address if you have one, and a phone number. I don’t expect to hear back from everyone I write, but I love it when I do, so I make it as easy as possible for them to reach out if they want. If you want to take it a step further, you could be so bold as to include a self-addressed stamped envelope in your letter, making it even easier for them to respond. I don’t advise this in every case, but it’s worth considering in some instances. Your parents and/or teachers might be able to help you determine when this is a good strategy.

The Post Script (P.S.) – P.S.’s are often the best parts of a letter. Add something here that will put a smile on your letter-getter’s face. Sometimes, if I don’t know the person, I’ll put something that’s unique or interesting about me in this section. I’ve had people tell me that even though they get thousands of letters, it was the P.S. that made my letter stick out and prompted them to respond.

Coloring Your Letter Stationery

You’ll notice that to the right of the page where I describe the letter, there’s an almost blank piece of paper with a border around it. This is where you write your letter. The borders were put there to make your letter look cool. Feel free to color them in or leave them blank. I decided to leave you a big open space so you could draw a picture, add a picture, or create another awesome design if you feel inspired. Or, maybe you’ve got such a way with words that you’ll be taking up every last inch of white space with well-chosen prose. It’s your letter. You choose how you want it to look. Remember, you can’t get this wrong.

There’s a saying that the best letters are the letters that honor the personality of the receiver as much as the sender. So have fun with style, structure, and color, and enjoy putting yourself on the page.

Getting Your Letter Ready to Mail

When you’ve completed your letter, gently tear it out at the seams. Then, cut along the friendly dotted line and stick it in your favorite colored envelope. (Amazon, Michael’s, and Zazzle.com are great places to pick up some fun and funky envelopes.)

Address your letter and include your return address so you'll get it back to you in case you've unknowingly sent it to an outdated address. Or so that the lucky receiver can send a letter to you!

Find a cool stamp and then pop it in the mailbox. You can find some fun ones here: <http://uspsstamps.com/stamps>.

The 24 Letters

What follows are 24 letters you may be interested in writing. From your mom to your grandmother to your favorite famous person to the President of the United States, I've got you covered.

And always remember this: No matter who you're writing to, this isn't about becoming a master-level letter writer. Though that could definitely happen if you keep at it. Rather, it's about getting your letters out the door so the people you have love, gratitude, and appreciation for know how you feel.

My challenge to you, if you choose to accept it, is to write a letter a day every day for an entire month. If you want a glimpse into the life of someone who has made this a habit - and has seen extraordinary results from it, [read this coach's story](#).

Write a letter, change a life.

Letter to Your Mom

This letter is for your mom, step-mom, neighbor mom, or anyone who serves as a mom figure to you.

Moms are pretty special people. Basically, their entire lives are devoted to making your life awesome. From feeding you, driving you around for all your sports and play dates, making sure you have clothes to wear, keeping you healthy, helping you with homework, and ensuring you have your favorite snack in the pantry, your mom's got it all dialed in.

And let's face it, moms don't get enough credit. They don't get thanked or praised nearly enough. Now you get to change that.

I know for a fact that if I got a card in the mail from my daughter, I'd pass out with happiness. So, you know, see if you can get your mom to pass out with happiness with your card.

My guess is you know your mom pretty well. And you probably already have 1001 things you want to say to her, but in case you'd like some help getting started, here's a fill-in-the-blank template you can have some fun with.

Dear Mom,

I'm the luckiest girl/boy in the world because you're my mom. I love it when we _____ and _____ together. And you make me laugh so hard when you _____. One of my favorite memories of all time was when you/we _____.

I know I don't say it enough, but I want to thank you for _____, _____ and _____. Oh, and also the time you _____.

You're the best mom ever!

Letter to Your Dad

This letter is for your dad, step-dad, neighbor dad, or anyone who serves as a dad figure to you.

Dads are pretty awesome, right?

They love to play with you, tease you (in a good way), build stuff with you (and show it off), teach you how to blow things up or do long division, coach your team, wrestle you to the ground, and take you to sporting events.

Well, my dad didn't do most of those things. But I hear that's what some dads do. And even though my dad mostly stuck with teaching me long division, he's still the coolest and most awesome dad I know.

And I'm sure you've got your own reasons for thinking your dad is awesome.

So, why not tell him?

Hi Dad!

I'm writing you this letter because I just have to tell you how awesome you are. I love it when you _____ and _____ and _____. And I feel like the luckiest girl/boy in the world because I get to call you my dad.

Some of my favorite memories with you are when we _____, _____ and _____. And I will never forget the time you _____. We laughed so hard I almost peed my pants!

If I had to come up with 5 adjectives to describe your awesomeness, I'd say that I most appreciate that you're _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Thanks for being the coolest dad ever.

Letter to Your Sibling(s)

When I was young, my sister died. She became really sick, and they just couldn't find a way to make her better. My brother and I were sad for a really long time. Actually, I'm still really sad about it every day.

That experience made me appreciate my brother in a whole new way. Don't get me wrong. We still fought like it was World War III. One time, he got me in a headlock - during what was supposed to be a "friendly" wrestling match - and he pulled the earring out of my pierced ear. There was blood. It hurt. And now - over 30 years later, I still have a giant hole in my ear as a forever reminder!

So, yes, there will be fights. And probably times when you yell things like, "I wish I was an only child!!!" But siblings are like built-in best friends. And while I totally give you permission to be super mad at them for the very annoying and sometimes hurtful things they say or do, I also give you permission to tell them how awesome they are.

Dear NAME,

I know we sometimes _____, and we don't always agree on _____, but I still love having you as my brother/sister.

Oh, and I'm really sorry for the time I _____. That was totally uncool.

The truth is, I can't imagine not having you as a brother/sister. Remember the time we _____ and _____. Or the time Mom and Dad got so mad at us for _____. That was awesome!!

Even though I know I don't say it enough, I think you're _____.

Thanks for being an awesome brother/sister. And I promise I won't _____ again.

Letter to Your Grandparent(s)

Grandparents are, well, the best. They take you places, let you eat cake, buy you things, and spoil you crazy with love.

I haven't had a grandparent in 20 years, and that makes me all kinds of sad. But I still remember them like it was yesterday. I remember the lessons they taught me, the fun things we did together, and how I always knew I could cry on their shoulders when my own parents were making me crazy. Or, you know, wouldn't let me do something I should have most certainly been allowed to do.

If you're lucky enough to have grandparents in your life who love the pants off you, make sure you tell them before it's too late.

Dear Grandma/Grandpa,

I wanted to send you this letter to tell you that you're the best grandma/grandpa ever.

I'm so grateful to you for _____ and _____ and

_____.

Some of my best memories were when we _____ and

_____. *I hope we get to do some more stuff like that in the future.*

Thank you for _____. *Thank you for*

_____. *And thank you the most for*

_____.

I'm so lucky to have you as my grandma/grandpa.

When can we see each other again?

I love you!

Letter to Your Best Friend

My best friend growing up was named Laura. We've not seen each other in person in over 16 years, but to this day, we still call each other on birthdays, catch up for hours on the phone, and laugh our butts off about the things we used to do. And we're 40 years old!!

Best friends make everything better. They make you laugh so hard you pee your pants. They make you feel better when someone else makes you feel awful. They stand up for you. They share their lunch with you. They help you with your homework. They stay up all night watching movies and listening to music with you. Even if they don't like it. And they feel like the siblings you wish you had. Or the one you'd be happy to replace with the one you do have!

You'll probably have lots of best friends over the course of your life. But each one is special and totally deserves to be called out for being awesome.

Dear NAME,

You are the best friend ever!

Thank you for _____ . For the time you

_____ . And for all the times you _____

when I really needed it. I cannot imagine not having you as my best friend.

Remember the time we _____ . Or the time we

_____ .

You're like the peanut butter to my jelly. And you know how much I like peanut butter!!

Thanks for being the best friend ever!

Letter to Your Favorite Teacher

This might be my favorite letter. Because I was a teacher. Well, I still am a teacher, I just don't teach in a regular classroom anymore.

I still have letters students wrote me 15 years ago. I still write to teachers I had 25 years ago!

Some teachers enter your life, and you're never the same. Like Mr. Saggert at Marian High School. And Dr. Marlaire at Marquette University. And Dr. May at the University of Virginia. These were little angels who paraded around as humans to help me when I needed it most. Well, I know their whole job was not to serve me, but that's what it felt like. Because that's how really good teachers make you feel. I will NEVER ever forget those teachers. I knew it at the time, and I'm just as sure of it today, all these years later.

I'm sure you've had (or maybe have) a teacher like that in your life. (If not, don't worry. He/she will show up when you least expect it.) And I know for sure that if you call them out for being awesome, they will hold that letter close to their heart, put it in a box somewhere, and move it around with them from house to house and city to city until the day they die. Just like I will.

Dear NAME,

You may not know this, but the reason I _____ was because of what you taught me. Your support and encouragement have taught me that _____ and that _____.

If it weren't for you, I never would have _____ or _____ . I can/could always count on you for _____ , and I will always be grateful to you.

Thank you for being one of the best teachers I've ever had!

Letter to Your Role Model

Quick.

When I say, "Who's your role model?" what's the first name that pops into your head?

Now, let me ask you this... when was the last time you told that person how you felt about them and how much they inspire you?

I remember getting an assignment one time in middle school when we had to write about one of our role models. I wrote about my mom. When I finished my essay, I gave it to her to read. With tears in her eyes, she looked at me and said, "I had no idea this is how you felt about me."

I remember thinking, 'Well, that's dumb. Of course you know how I feel about you.' But of course, she didn't. I mean, she knew I loved her because I showed love in other ways, but I had never been so specific before. If you haven't figured it out yet, you get points for being specific in writing. And as you'll learn soon, also in life.

People do not know how we feel about them unless we tell them. And if anyone should be hearing from you, it's the people or person you look up to and admire the most.

So, don't be shy. Shower them with gratitude and praise. They'll eat it up like it's a Crazy Kreme donut.

One fun way to add a little punch to your letter is to name a day after them. Because, after all, who doesn't want a day named after their magnificence?

Dear NAME,

(Insert lots of praise and all of the specific reasons you're calling them out for being awesome.)

Then...

I hereby declare that today is (insert person's name) Day. It is on this day that we celebrate your _____, your _____, and your _____. I heretofore promise that I will observe this day every year for decades to come. Your amazingness will be forever celebrated. Thank you for being awesome enough to warrant another holiday.

Letter to Your Favorite Coach

I used to be a high school tennis coach, and one year, at the end of the season banquet, while I was standing up to receive an award from the players, one of the parents said, "You can always tell how much the kids like the coach by how many nicknames they give her/him."

Seeing as I had managed to rack up a slew of them over the past couple of years that they all had fun shouting out, that made me feel pretty good.

I love remembering all of my nicknames: Little D (my brother was Big D), Little Dilo, Lani, Coach D, Coach Dorito, Ms. D, Bruiser, Smelani, Rooster, goat, Mel, melons....

A short name or nickname is a sign of trust, connection, and friendship. (Usually. It better be a nice nickname because we're not doing any mean business here.) I love it when people call me by my nicknames. I even like it when one of my best friends for over twenty years calls me Smelani. That's pure love!

When we give someone a nickname, we're expressing our affection for that person.

Aside from my daughter, who has five nicknames that I use on a daily basis, and all of my dogs who have dozens, it's been a long time since I've given someone a nickname. And I kind of miss it. So, I thought it would be fun and hugely complimentary to bestow a perfectly positive nickname on the coach who has meant the most to you.

Dear Coach NAME,

Have I ever told you how _____ you are? And how much I love having you as a coach. You're always pushing, encouraging, and believing in me, even when I don't

always believe in myself. I'll never forget the time you _____ when I _____.

I once heard that you can tell how much someone is liked by how many nicknames they have. Well, because you're so _____, I think that you should be officially crowned with the following name: _____.

Now you can count yourself one nickname richer.

Thank you for being the best coach ever!

The Angry Letter You'll Never Send

Alright. You know how I said that the letter to your teacher is my favorite one? I lied. This is my favorite one.

I believe in using writing to figure things out in life. Whenever I get upset, I write. Whenever I'm confused about something, I write. Whenever I'm sad or hurt or feel left out, I write. And whenever I get so mad at someone I want to throw Kool-aid all over their brand-new sweater, I write instead.

Then, when I really need to put a cap on it, I put the letter in the mail. There's no address on it. I just write the person's name and stick it in the box.

I once had a REALLY bad fight with a friend, and was so mad that I wrote four angry letters to her. And I dropped every single one of them in the mailbox. I laugh every time I think of the mail carrier getting another letter to "Sally" with no address on it. I know he/she read those letters because how could you not? I hope my anger made them laugh.

But I'll tell you what. Getting mad on paper and taking it out on an unsuspecting mailbox is much better than saying mean words to the person you're mad at. And writing, for real, actually makes you less mad.

I don't have a fill-in-the-blank for this one because my guess is your anger needs to take its own shape. Big words, small words, bad words, pictures. Do whatever you've got to do to get the anger out. It'll feel so good!!

Then, go pop it in the mailbox. Not yours, though. One of those big blue ones out on the street.

Letter to Yourself

If you've ever heard of a time capsule, this is like a mini version of that.

Here's the idea: you write a letter to yourself that you send back to yourself at some point in the future.

I used to do this with a lot of my students. On the first day of school, they'd write a letter to themselves; on the last day, I'd give it to them. It's a great way to reflect on what you've done, what you care about, and how much you've learned over a specific period of time.

One of my favorite sites online is FutureMe.org. You go to the page, enter your email address, write a note to yourself, and choose the date in the future you'd like it to be emailed back to you. Then you hit submit, and they hold it in their hot little hands until it's time to email it back to you. They have letters in their database that will be sent back to people as far ahead as 2073.

How cool is that?

You could either write this letter to your future self on the stationery provided in this book and then give it to a parent or sibling and ask them to mail it to you on a specified date, or you could just head over to FutureMe.org and write it there.

Sometimes, it's fun to just do it for one year ahead. Sometimes, if you're starting something new like middle school, you could do it on your first day of middle school and then have it sent back to you on your last day of middle school. It'll be crazy to see how much you grow and change during that time.

Here's a simple prompt to help you get your letter started...

Dear Future Me,

It's a year from now, and things have gone more awesome than I ever imagined.

I am...

I have...

I learned...

The Thank You Letter

Did you know that the simple practice of saying thank you to someone and expressing genuine gratitude makes it possible for you to have these seven things:

- More and better friendships
- Better health and more energy so you can be better at all of the sports and activities you love doing
- More happiness in your head
- Less time spent in a bad mood
- Better sleep
- Better thoughts about yourself
- Better capacity to handle life when it gets messy or difficult

Yep, you can get all of that just by calling people out for being awesome.

“Grateful kids tend to be much more satisfied with their lives,” says Jeffrey Froh, an assistant professor of psychology and the director of the Laboratory for Gratitude in Youth at Hofstra University. “They do better in school and are less materialistic, less depressed, and less envious. Their relationships are much stronger and more supportive.”

So, with this lovely letter you're about to write and send, you will make the receiver's day and do yourself a solid, too.

If you're thanking someone for a gift, you might consider including a picture of yourself with the gift, using it, or wearing it.

Dear NAME,

I just wanted to send a quick note to say thank you for _____.

You may not know this, but I _____. Because of what you do and the person you are, I _____. I am so grateful to you for helping me to see that _____.

Thank you doesn't seem big enough. But I'm going to say it anyway...

THANK YOU!!

The I'm Going to Miss You Letter

We all know goodbyes are a drag. But it can be especially difficult when they're a good friend, and you have no idea when (or even if) you'll ever see them again.

I still remember when one of my very close childhood friends pulled away from their house the morning of their cross-country move. I felt like someone had just chopped off my right arm. I couldn't even picture one afternoon without her, let alone the rest of my life!

They always say it's hardest for the ones who get left, but I've moved away from great friends enough times to know that being the leaver stinks too.

What could make it a little bit better? Making sure the person knows that they'll be missed by someone as awesome as you.

So, whether someone is moving across the country or just going to a new school, you'd be an exceptionally fabulous friend by telling them how much you're going to miss them.

One of the best "I'm going to miss you letters" I ever got came in the form of a picture book that included pictures of me and my friend on all of our adventures and the funny things we used to say to each other. I still pull that book out to this day whenever I need to smile. What are some ways you can make this letter extra special?

Dear NAME,

I'm not happy one bit about this moving business. In fact, I've been pretending this whole time that it's not really happening because it makes me too mad. I'm going to miss you so much. I mean, who am I going to _____ with? And who else can I do

_____ and _____ and _____ with?

Remember the time we _____ and you _____. That was one of the most hilarious things I've ever seen.

I hope that we'll be able to keep in touch. If my parents ever let me get a phone!!! we can text and Facetime each other. Maybe they'll feel so bad for me because you're leaving that they'll give me a phone. (Doubt it.)

Will you write me as soon as you get there and tell me all about your new place and neighborhood? I want to hear all about it. Well, that's not totally true. I'd rather not hear anything at all about you not being here anymore, but you know what I mean.

I'm going to miss you every day!

The Apology Letter

This letter is a real doozy.

Apologies can be hard. I mean, who likes to say how they messed something up?

But here's the deal. We ALL mess up. Regularly. And it's not the end of the world.

If you hurt a friend, broke a window at your neighbor's house, or blew ink out of a pen onto the carpet at school (I don't know anything about it!), just own up to it and then move forward.

If the person doesn't accept your apology, you'll figure out how to deal with it, but you can rest easy knowing you did your part to improve it. Sometimes, other people just take a while to come around. That's not your problem. Thankfully.

There are five parts of a great apology letter:

- Specificity
- Responsibility
- Genuineness
- Forgiveness
- Promise

And you can cover them all in a short paragraph and then get on with your day. By the way, I'm 40 years old and still use this formula whenever I need to apologize. It works!

You could use the first example if you were apologizing to a friend. You could use the second example if you were apologizing to someone like a teacher or neighbor.

Dear NAME OF FRIEND,

Yesterday, I told Emma a secret you shared with me, which was insensitive and mean to do. I wish I could take it back. I made a really poor choice in the moment, and I betrayed your trust because I wanted her to like me. I'm so sorry. Can you forgive me? I promise I'll never do anything like that to you ever again.

Dear NAME OF TEACHER,

Yesterday, when you had to run out of the room, I grabbed your full cup of coffee and poured it all into the sink. When you got back and realized your coffee was gone,

everyone in the class started laughing. (Which, I have to admit, was exactly what I wanted everyone to do!) I'm sorry I did that. It wasn't nice, and it wasn't fair to you. Sometimes, I want everyone to like me so badly that I do stupid things. Can you forgive me? I promise I'll never do anything like it again.

The Like/Love Letter

For my 17th birthday, one of my best friends sent me a singing telegram to our junior prom. The guy dressed in a giant banana costume came running up to me with balloons, singing Happy Birthday.

It was one of the coolest surprises I've ever received.

Sending a telegram to someone you like may be a little strange or over the top, and gosh, I don't even know if they do singing telegrams anymore, but you can pretend that if you could send them one, you'd know exactly what you'd want the singing telegram person to say. I mean sing.

Note: While I'm all about telling people how we feel, especially when what we feel is that they're totally awesome, be sure to check in with your heart before you go pouring it out to someone. Do you trust them with your feelings? Are you ready to accept not getting a response from them? Will you be heartbroken if they don't respond? Do a little check-in and talk with a parent or trusted adult before you dive in on this one.

Dear NAME,

I thought about sending you a singing telegram today. But I couldn't decide between the clown or the banana. So, instead, imagine that there's a giant cartoon-esque character standing outside your door right now. Here's what he would say:

Here's to you for being _____. Here's to you for being _____. And here's to you for being _____. My life is better because of your _____. And if I

didn't have you to _____ with, I would be seriously sad. And make sad faces all day. Thank you for your _____, _____ and every other "ness" you possess.

Letter to Your Favorite Author

When people ask me who my favorite author is, I can never answer. I have about a million favorite authors. And I like them all for different reasons.

I love how some of them make me think about things I've never thought of before. I love how some of them take me to interesting places where I get to meet characters I'd love to be friends with in real life. And I love how some of them just help me get lost in a mystery for a few hours on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

What do you love about your favorite authors? Think of the last book you read that you didn't want to put down. The one you stayed up all night reading under the covers with your flashlight. Keep that person in mind, and then get out the pen that makes you feel really smart and get ready to write.

What better way to express gratitude to your favorite author than writing them a letter? You know, writer to writer?

Here's how to make sure your fabulous letter gets into their hot little hands:

Find them online. Most authors have some sort of online presence. Do some digging and see if you can find their address. If you can't find it, find their publisher and address the letter to:

Author NAME, c/o NAME OF PUBLISHER + the address.

The publisher will get it to him/her. Hopefully.

Dear NAME,

I absolutely love your book _____. I stayed up until 3 am reading it the other night because I couldn't wait to find out what happened to

_____.

My favorite part of the book was when _____ and _____ happened. I love how you _____. It totally hooked me in and made me want to keep reading.

I've also read your books _____ and _____. Unfortunately, I've read everything you've written already. Sometimes more than once! Are you in the middle of writing another book now? I hope so. I can't wait to read more of your books!

Letter to Your Favorite Actor/Musician/Singer/Artist

When I was young, I was absolutely mad and crazy for a band called Duran Duran. Your parents will know who they are. But they're like a thousand years old right now. I loved them. And I was convinced that we'd be best friends if only they knew me.

I wrote them fan letters. I never heard back, as expected, but whatever, I still found tremendous amounts of joy in listening to their music and telling them how awesome they were.

So that's the thing about writing to famous people. The chances of getting a genuine handwritten letter from them in return are well, not good. But expressing gratitude for someone is not about getting something in return. You know that already. It's just about acknowledging someone for bringing some awesomeness into your life.

With that said, you still have to take your letter seriously. They get a bajillion letters, and you want yours to stand out. So here's my advice: be specific, show your personality, and keep it short.

Dear NAME,

I'm writing to let you know that I LOVE your music. My friends and I hang out in my garage and listen to it for hours on the weekends, while at the same time trying to play it ourselves. And I'm always playing it on my headphones when I'm skateboarding to school.

I've been practicing the guitar since I was ____, and my teacher told me my performance of _____ showed "real promise." Maybe not as grand as I was hoping for, but I'll take it. My dream is to be able to perform on stages all over the world and share my love of music just like you do.

My mom is always telling me to "Turn it off!" because she can't think. Little does she know that I found her listening to your music in her office the other day while she was working. She pretended it was on accidentally, but I think it's safe to say that my mom's a fan, too.

Can't wait for your next album.

Thanks for being awesome and inspiring me to keep practicing!

Letter to the Athlete Who Inspires You

Sports were always what I cared about most as a kid. I started playing tennis when I was about five and played my whole life. As a kid, I'd sit for hours and hours and watch tennis matches on TV. I wanted to be that good. To have their life. To get to travel around the world to warm locations and play my favorite sport. Whenever I'd play, I'd channel my favorite player and hope I could pull off some extraordinary, crowd-on-their-feet type of shot. It happened less than never.

But it's all good. Having people to admire and look up to is a good thing. It helps us set personal expectations and strive for something bigger in our own lives.

What athlete inspires you most? What about them inspires you specifically, and how do you bring that out onto the court, field, pool, or track with you? What have you learned from watching them, on and off the playing field?

Keep all of those things in mind when you write your letter.

Dear NAME,

I just watched you _____, and it was amazing. I've been playing _____ for ___ years, and you're my favorite _____. *I never miss a game, and I've been following you ever since you _____.* *I read about the time you _____ and _____ and it really inspired me.*

Right now, I'm spending most of my time working on _____. My coach says _____. I just have to _____.

Thanks for inspiring me to be a better athlete and to _____. Good luck on your next _____. I'll be watching, as always!

Thanks for being awesome!

(Note: You might want to include a picture of you with your team or playing your sport in your letter to make it stand out even more and add some personality to it.)

Letter to the President/Elected Official

Do you care deeply about an issue in the world or your state or local community right now?

Are you fired up about something that's happening, and you absolutely, positively must do something about it?

Writing a letter to an elected official, or even the President of the United States, is a great place to start.

You can find addresses to elected officials here:

<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

If you want to write a letter to the President, mail it to:

President NAME

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

If the letter absolutely must get there ASAP, you can email the President by filling in the form at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>.

Dear President NAME,

Date

My name is _____, I'm ___ years old and in the ___ grade at _____ in _____, ____.

I'm writing to you because _____. I think that _____ and _____.

I was wondering, _____?

I would love it if you could write a letter to me and my classmates letting us know more about _____ and what we can do to _____. I've already started to _____, but I'd love some more ideas on how to get involved and make sure that I'm doing everything I can to _____.

Better yet, if you're going to be in the area, we'd love it if you'd visit our school. We'll even make sure we have lots of (insert his/her favorite food or something) for you.

Letter to Your Favorite Company/Store

I can't even count the number of times I've written to companies I love.

From the time I wrote a "brilliant" pitch to Post about my idea for a Grape Nuts commercial, to the time I wrote to Kool-Aid asking them to bring back the Great Bluedini flavor, to the time I wrote my favorite clothing store to gush about my new wardrobe and gently suggest they start making maternity clothes, I'm always exercising my gratitude muscle for the companies I appreciate most.

Does anything ever come of it? Well, not yet. But voicing my appreciation and putting my money where my mouth is makes me feel good. So there's that.

And like I always say, surprisingly fabulous things start to happen to you when you spend time showing love, appreciation, and gratitude to others, so, you just never know.

Here's an example of a letter my daughter would appreciate that you could use for inspiration.

Dear Play It Again Sports,

My parents have a rule that goes something like this: "There's no way we're going to buy brand new equipment (AGAIN) for a sport you've never played before until you know and we know that it's something you want to actually pursue!"

They say this rule with conviction every time I walk in the door talking about some new sport I want to pick up. (Which is a lot.) The other day, I decided I wanted to take lacrosse lessons. A brand new stick, helmet, and everything else would have been a lot of money. So, we headed over to your store, and I got everything I needed for less than \$25.

I started lacrosse yesterday, and I love it. Well, for now. Thanks for making it possible for me to try things out without making my parents broke in the process!

Now, what's your favorite store or company that deserves some praise? Go ahead, write them a letter and make their day.

Letter to the Troops

Our troops do some pretty amazing work for our country. They work hard, put their lives on the line every day, and do it all while being far away from the friends and family they love.

If you know someone in the military or you've ever heard one of our troops talk about what they look forward to the most when they're at their base or have been deployed, they'll tell you it's the letters and packages they receive from people all over the country expressing their gratitude.

Those packages and letters are a lifeline for them. And now you can be part of sending the love.

Instead of sharing a template for a letter, I'd like to introduce you to Operation Gratitude.

Operation Gratitude sends 200,000+ care packages every year filled with food, entertainment, hygiene, and handmade items, plus personal letters of appreciation to veterans, first responders, new recruits, wounded heroes, their caregivers, and to individually named US service members deployed overseas and their families waiting at home.

Their mission is to “lift the spirits and meet the evolving needs of the Military and First Responder communities, and provide volunteer opportunities for civilians anywhere in America to express their appreciation to all who serve our nation.”

They like to include at least five letters of appreciation for each package, so they need a LOT of letters from people like you and me.

Their website contains all the information you need to write a great letter and comply with their requirements. You can access all of it right here:

<https://www.operationgratitude.com/writeletters>.

If you aren't using this book as part of your writing or literacy class at school, this might be a good opportunity for you to talk to your teacher about it. You could lead the charge and start a campaign to get everyone in your class - or even your entire school - to write a letter to the troops. That's gratitude x 1000!

Letter to Firefighters/Police

Did you know that if you take cookies to a fire department, they'll give you high fives and start chowing down on them before you even leave the station? But if you take cookies to a police station, they'll politely thank you, and then the minute you walk out the door, they'll throw your delicious cookies straight in the trash?

That's because everyone loves firefighters, but police... not so much. And they don't want to get poisoned or killed or something.

Well, at least that's the story I hear from the firefighters I know.

But you don't have to make cookies. Sometimes, a letter that says, “Hey, I feel pretty dang great knowing that you've got my back, so thanks for that,” is perfectly perfect.

A lot of times, firefighters and police get taken for granted. Sure, if there's a big old fire and someone saves the day or someone catches a criminal, they might get some recognition; however, most of the time, they just go about their business, do their jobs that involve 1001 things to keep us safe, that we don't even know about, but go completely unnoticed.

How sad.

If you're happy that you're not on fire, you're not dead, or you haven't had the entire contents of your house stolen, then maybe it's time to bust out your stationery and write a heartfelt letter to the men and women who serve your community every day.

Dear NAME or COMPANY/UNIT,

I wanted to write to thank your _____ department for all of the work you do to _____.

I know that you have a really hard job, and you're not always recognized by the people in our community for all of your efforts to _____. But I want you to know that your service has not gone unnoticed by me. I'm grateful every day that we have people in our community like you who are devoting their lives to making sure we're safe and secure in our cars, homes, and community.

Please share this with all of the people you work with.

Thank you for your service!

Letter to Your Favorite Restaurant

Think fast.

It's your birthday, and your parents say to you, "We're going to celebrate your birthday by going to your favorite restaurant for dinner. Where do you want to go?"

What's the first one that came to mind? That's the one you should write to. If you're anything like my daughter, you may have come up with more than one, and it may not have been the quickest decision of your life, but I'm still betting that a couple of clear winners rose to the top of the list.

Choose one and then write a letter to tell them how much you love their restaurant. Once you've written your letter, you can either pop it in the mail right away or take it with you the next time you go. If you call out the chef in particular, I'm not promising you anything, but it is possible that he/she might send a special (and complimentary!) dish to your table for calling them out for being awesome.

As you've probably noticed from all of the letter writing you've been doing, people feel REALLY good after they've just been told how awesome they are. Sooooo, getting a great chef on your side is not a bad idea.

(Note: If you want to write directly to the chef, just call up the restaurant and ask them the name of the head chef. If you want to write to the owner, do the same thing. But you know, ask for the owner's name.)

Dear Chef NAME,

I wanted you to know that when my parents asked me what restaurant I wanted to go to so we could celebrate my 10th birthday, I chose yours immediately.

My favorite dish is _____ . I love the _____ and the _____ and _____ . My dad always sticks his fork in my meal, making me mad. Get your own _____ if you like it so much!

We've been coming to this restaurant since I was _____ years old. I have no idea if you've been the chef here all that time, but I do know that whatever you're doing is awesome. Thanks for making such good food. Oh, and have you ever thought of adding _____ to the menu? I love that!

Letter to Your Doctor/Dentist

I don't know about you, but I pretty much hate going to the doctor or dentist. Has anyone ever woken up in the morning and said, "I can't wait to go to the dentist today!"

Never.

But at the same time, my doctors and dentists are amazing. They keep me healthy, my body running like a well-oiled machine, and my teeth looking clean and pearly white.

So every year (okay, almost every year), I make it a point to write them a quick note thanking them for making sure I don't die. If you're alive right now, which I'm quite certain you are, you likely also have some Drs to thank.

Oh, and you know how you go to your doctor's or dentist's office and see a big board of pictures with smiling faces looking at you? These are all people who gave their doctor's pics of them to show their thanks and appreciation. Why not slap a totally great picture of you on your stationery with a quick note underneath? You might even get extra suckers or "prizes" next time you go.

Dear Dr. NAME,

I just wanted to send you a quick note to thank you for keeping me healthy and making sure my teeth don't fall out.

If I'm being honest, I don't LOVE coming to your office, because dentists, but since I have to come, I'm glad you're my dentist. If any of my friends ask me who I go to, I'll make sure to tell them you're the best.

Thanks!!

Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor is a great way to practice being an involved citizen. A letter to the editor is meant to express your opinion about an article you read in the paper, magazine, or website.

(Note: The email address for the editor can generally be found under "Contact Us" at the bottom of the home page of the website for that publication.)

Important guidelines to follow:

- **Be timely:** Write your letter within a day or two of the article's date.
- **Include your contact information:** Include your full name, city, state, phone number, and email.
- **Be clear and concise:** Write no more than 250 words to make your ONE point. You may have more points, but better to focus on your strongest one.
- **Fact check:** Make sure you have your facts right. Letters that are factually inaccurate don't get printed.
- **Hook the reader:** Get your reader's attention and do your best to keep it until the very last line of your letter. In copywriting, we always say that the goal of the first sentence is to get them to read the second sentence. And on and on. Open with an interesting fact or strong statement and keep your points as interesting as possible.
- **Be nice:** Show respect for the opposite opinion. Just because you may disagree with the editor, it doesn't mean you should be disrespectful or rude.
- **Proofread:** Read your letter out loud, even if to yourself. Then, read it again. Check for grammar and spelling mistakes. If possible, ask another person to read your letter for accuracy and clarity.
- **Don't take it personally if your letter isn't printed:** Editors get MANY letters for every article they write. Even if your letter is compelling and

well-written, it might not be printed if it addresses the same issue as letters already printed.

By the way, if done well, this letter will give you many bonus points with your parents and teachers. I used to give my students extra credit all of the time when they showed me the letters they wrote to the editor. Maybe your teacher will do the same?

Want to see some great letters to the editor that other kids have written? Check them out at https://kaboom.org/resources/grassroots_action_toolkit/mobilize_media/write_letters_to_editor

What's Next?

I'm so glad you asked!

Many things could be next.

You might receive a phone call, email, text, or handwritten response from someone you wrote telling you that you made their day.

You might receive a little present in the mail from someone who thinks you're pretty awesome too.

You might notice that your writing skills have gone through the roof, and your teacher wants to know your secret so she can share it with the rest of the class.

You might decide that writing letters every month, every week, or every day is one of the best ways you can spend your time.

You might even experience something that neither you nor I could possibly predict. That's usually the case.

I have no idea what will happen for you once you write all of these letters, I just know something will.

When I began my first 30-day Hand Written Letter Project, I thought I'd just call some people out for being awesome, and that would be it.

Well, that was so far from being it. I can't even count all of the wonderful, surprising, and heart-warming things that happened to me simply because I put pen to paper.

When people participate in my 30-day Handwritten Letter Project, they experience the same thing. Unexpected surprises and awesomeness time and again.

If you'd like to continue your letter-writing extravaganza, or you think one of the adults in your life would, you can sign up to get 30 days of prompts, starters, and fill-in-the-blanks to make sharing your love, gratitude, and appreciation for others the easiest thing you'll ever do [here](#).

And if you'd like to read the most inspiring letter-writing story ever, read how one college basketball coach has been sending 300-500 letters every week to players and colleagues for 30 years! <http://tinyurl.com/letter-coach>. Even more proof that letter writing like this can change your life in seriously BIG ways.

About the Author

Melani Dizon, MA, MEd, is a former middle and high school teacher, athletic coach, counselor, CMO, and COO turned full-time writer. She believes that sending handwritten notes to people and calling them out for being awesome, whether you know them or not, is one of the best things you can do for yourself, others, and the world.

She also believes that writing is the doorway into just about everything. And that there are pens out there that can make you smarter. (You should get one.)

Melani lives in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband, daughter, and two dogs. More dogs is how many dogs she wants. When she's not writing, you can find her practicing yoga by candlelight, running the trails near her home, walking an insane amount of miles, dreaming about swimming pools, drinking scalding hot like the sun decaf chai, and thinking of other people she can call out for being awesome. Or making cookies.

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[Substack](#)