

## Elementary School Sample Lesson Plan:

# Writing Letters to a Senior Pen Pal



**ESTIMATED LESSON DURATION:** 1 HOUR

**GRADE LEVELS:** K-5 (with adaptations for younger and older audiences)

[Ready to Care® by Home Instead](#) is calling on educators and students with caring hearts to [become a pen pal](#) and write letters to uplift older adults across North America. Through our pen pal initiative, students can create a meaningful, safe friendship with an older adult while developing critical skills such as writing, storytelling and empathy.

## Lesson Overview

Writing a letter is a simple act of kindness that can brighten the day of an older adult. In this lesson, students will build skills in written communications by writing a letter to a pen pal through Ready to Care by Home Instead®.

Teachers can submit letters to Ready to Care by mail. Home Instead will review the letters and distribute them to older adults across the nation.

## Objectives

- Learn the basic skills required to write a letter.
- Build empathy, communication and storytelling skills.

## Materials

- **Handwritten letters:** Paper, pencils/markers, envelopes, stamps
- **Typed letters:** Printer and computers or tablets

## Introduction

When we rely on our phones and text messages to convey love and appreciation, feelings can get lost in translation. When was the last time you gave someone a call? Or sent a letter to show someone you care? Connecting in these unique, personal ways isn't a thing of the past—it can speak volumes. For lonely seniors, it may be the one interaction they've had in a long time.

According to the U.S. Administration on Aging, more than 14 million older adults live alone—often going days or weeks without any social interaction. For many older adults, social distancing during the pandemic has amplified the loneliness they already feel. While social distancing is necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19, isolation can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of many older adults.

## Discussion Questions

### Questions to Build Empathy

- When was the last time you felt lonely? How did it make you feel?
- What is something that cheers you up when you feel lonely or sad?
- When was the last time a person did something nice for you?
- When was the last time you did something nice for a person?

### Questions about Pen Pals

- Why is it important to send letters even though we have other technology?
- Have you ever received a letter from someone who lives far away? How did it make you feel?

### Questions about Older Adults

- Do you know anyone over the age of 65?
- How was the world different 50 years ago?
- What is something you could learn from an older adult?

## Teacher Notes

Students can handwrite or type letters to be distributed to seniors through Home Instead. Ready to Care requires children to be over 13 years of age to submit a letter via email to [info@readytocare.com](mailto:info@readytocare.com) or via the form online at [ReadyToCare.com](https://www.readytocare.com). However, teachers can mail letters on behalf of younger students. For more information or to discuss various adaptations for your own classroom, please contact us at [info@readytocare.com](mailto:info@readytocare.com).

Letters written by children under the age of 13 years old can be sent by mail to Erin Albers at Home Instead's headquarters:

### Home Instead

c/o Erin Albers  
13323 California Street  
Omaha, NE 68154

## Lesson Adaptations and Extensions

**Virtual Learning:** For younger groups participating in virtual learning, encourage parents and guardians to be involved in the letter writing experience. For example, a child can help write a letter or create a drawing that can be uploaded to [www.readytocare.com](https://www.readytocare.com) with a parent or guardian's letter.

- **Younger Groups:** If students are unable to write a full letter, consider encouraging them to draw pictures or write a short message.
- **Older Groups:** Discuss the potential impacts of loneliness and isolation in the lesson introduction. Ask students to reflect on their own experiences during the pandemic.

**Building Empathy:** The mission of Ready to Care by Home Instead is to fearlessly create today the world we want to grow older in tomorrow. Discuss other ways that students can care for people around them. Emphasize the importance of every kind act, whether it's big or small.



# Sample Letter

**Dear** Pen Pal,

Start with a salutation!

It is nice to meet you. I am so glad we get to be pen pals. **My name is Leah and I am in third grade.**

Introduce yourself.

It's awesome to see my teachers and friends after doing virtual learning for so long. I hope we can go on a field trip again soon. My favorite subject at school is reading, and my favorite book is Charlotte's Web. I am also learning how to do my times tables in math class.

Share a little more about yourself. What are your favorite hobbies? Do you have any siblings? What makes you smile?

I live with my mom and dad and my younger sister. Her name is Mirabel and she is only three. She doesn't go to school yet. We also have a pet dog named Spot. He really likes to play fetch.

I also like to go to the zoo on the weekends. We always get ice cream at the zoo in the summer. My favorite animal is a cheetah because they can run very fast. **What is your favorite animal?**

Don't forget to ask your pen pal some questions, too!

I would really like to hear about you as well. What do you like to do?

**Your Friend,**  
Leah

Close your letter with a phrase like "Take Care," "Your Friend," or "Love."

