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# Introduction

Being able to write persuasively will help students be highly successful throughout their academic careers and into adult life. In a world where there are so many choices to make and so much information to assimilate, it is important that kids know how to identify key issues and identify their opinions on the issues. In writing about their viewpoints, students need to know how to take a position on an issue, support their position with meaningful examples, and write a conclusion that extends their key ideas.

The persuasive writing activities in this book have been designed specifically for students in years 6-9 and are divided into three categories of persuasive writing: letters, editorials and reviews. This comprehensive book contains practical, step-by-step lessons designed to build skills in such areas as developing voice and tone, appealing to the audience, using stylistic devices, and writing leads. Incorporated throughout the book are writing process connections, student samples and writing prompts that are ready for immediate classroom use. In addition, the rubrics throughout the book provide clearly defined criteria for evaluating the skills being taught. Included at the end of the book is a final assessment with cross-curricular connections.

Each lesson provides the student objective(s) and the procedure for completing the activities. Each lesson also contains many ideas for ways to extend the lesson: using portfolios, publishing, utilising technology, making home-school connections and assessing the final product. The section of the lesson entitled 'Portfolio Piece' provides ways to get students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing. The 'Publishing' section of the lesson prompts celebrations of student work. The 'Technology Connection' in each lesson offers ideas for doing research, revising, and enhancing text with graphics and fonts. The 'Home-School Connection' provides ways for linking what the students are learning in school with their lives outside of school. The 'Assessment' section includes ways to evaluate the students' work and determine if mastery has been achieved.

Finally, there is a strong community service learning thread woven throughout the book. Each section (writing letters, editorials and reviews) contains ten prompts, which ask students to write to real audiences for the purpose of improving their schools and communities. The lessons and reproducibles provide students with opportunities to take leadership roles and develop the understanding that individual voices do matter when trying to affect school or public policies. By completing the lessons in this book, students will learn how to write well-developed arguments for the purpose of persuading their audiences to act in ways that make our world a better place to live.



# Letter Writing

**Objective:** The student will identify the audience, purpose and desired course of action of a persuasive letter.

## Procedure

1. Brainstorm a list of topics that could be springboards for persuasive letters. Examples: neighbourhood cleanup, school funding for excursions, community involvement at the local nursing home, defective products or insufficient services from a local business, etc.
2. Display on the overhead the corresponding reproducible entitled 'Types of Persuasive Letters'. This reproducible contains information about five different kinds of persuasive letters and the audiences and purposes for these letters.
3. Read the information about the types of letters to the students. Ask the students the following questions: *Have you or anyone you know ever written a letter like one of these letters? When? What happened as a result?*
4. Read the 'Possible Scenarios for Letter Writing' (page 11) to the students. Lead the students through the completion of the chart. For example, if a student chose the 'Toothpaste Scenario,' he/she should identify that the type of letter is 'Complaint', the audience is 'The Managing Director of Sparkling White Toothpaste Company', and the purpose is 'To express dissatisfaction about a hair in the toothpaste'. Since the child in the scenario was pleased with the product based on past experience and most likely doesn't want to switch brands, the desired course of action from the company would be a letter of apology, a refund of the money spent on the toothpaste, and perhaps a few coupons to try the product again.
5. Have students complete one of the following letter-writing activities:
  - a. Have students write a letter to the Managing Director of 'Sparkling White Toothpaste Company'. Students should follow the business letter format as presented in the 'Business Letter Format' lesson.
  - b. Have students write a letter to the owner of the restaurant that made the cold pizza. Make sure they follow the business letter format.
  - c. Have students write a letter to the manufacturer of the defective model car. Make sure they follow the business letter format.
  - d. Have students write a letter of request to a parent for a favourite meal or to plan a trip to a favourite holiday destination.

# Letter Writing *(cont.)*

- e. Have students write a letter of request to the school parent/teacher association requesting funds for an excursion to a local museum, aquarium or zoo. Students should include in their letters the educational purpose of the excursion.
- f. Have students write a letter to the principal with suggestions and rationales for changing or improving current school policies. Students could write suggestions for refining or changing rules related to the tuckshop, hallway, dismissal from school, or locker use.

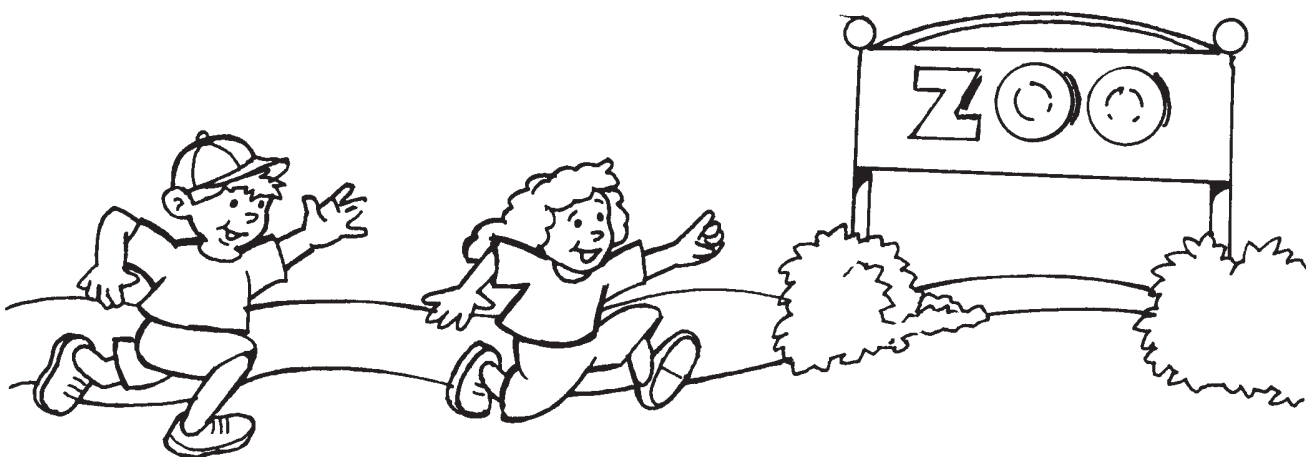
**Portfolio Piece:** Have students write persuasive letters for inclusion in their writing portfolios. Give students ‘sticky notes’ to identify in their letters the audience, purpose and desired course of action from the audience. Instruct students to write a reflection and predict whether their letters would achieve the desired course of action.

**Publishing:** Have students write letters to the editor of a local newspaper or magazine about a particular community issue or letters of complaint to a company about a particular product with which they were dissatisfied. You may want to let them choose from these options. Mail the letters and wait for a response from the audience.

**Technology Connection:** Have students use a word-processing program to create their letters. Remind the students to use business letter format and fonts that are professional.

**Home-School Connection:** Encourage students to discuss with their parents local community issues that merit a letter to the editor. If students write letters of request to their parents to plan a special dinner or trip, remind them to write a thank you note if their parents comply with their requests. Remind students to be respectful towards parents even if they do not fulfill their requests.

**Assessment:** Give students four points for correctly completing the chart following the scenario activity. Students receive one point for correctly completing each of the four categories: type of letter, audience, purpose and desired course of action.



# Types of Persuasive Letters

Type of Letter	Audience	Purpose
<b>To the Editor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—editor of a local newspaper, newsletter, magazine or TV news show</li> <li>—editor of a national newspaper, newsletter, magazine or TV news show</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to express an opinion or ask a question about an article in a previous issue</li> <li>• to express an opinion about a local or national issue</li> <li>• to respond to a previous letter to the editor</li> </ul>
<b>Request</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—friends or family</li> <li>—company (manager, supervisor)</li> <li>—school (principal, teacher)</li> <li>—government (parliamentarian, judge, police inspector, lord mayor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to request information</li> <li>• to request action be taken on a particular matter</li> <li>• to request improvement with regards to a particular product or service</li> </ul>
<b>Complaint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—company (manager, supervisor)</li> <li>—school (principal, teacher)</li> <li>—government (parliamentarian, judge, police inspector, lord mayor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to express dissatisfaction with a particular product, service, decision or policy</li> </ul>
<b>Sales</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—consumers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to sell a particular product to a consumer</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—company (manager, supervisor)</li> <li>—school (principal, teacher, guidance counsellor, tertiary admissions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to recommend a person for a job or acceptance to a school</li> </ul>

# Possible Scenarios for Letter Writing

**Directions:** Read each of the following scenarios. Choose one and complete the chart at the bottom of the page.

## Toothpaste Scenario

Suppose you bought some toothpaste last night at the local supermarket. The toothpaste, which was manufactured by the Sparkling White Toothpaste Company, was the same brand you always buy. You like this brand of toothpaste best because it is the cheapest and prevents cavities. Later that same evening, you unscrewed the toothpaste lid and prepared to squeeze some toothpaste onto your toothbrush. But something didn't seem quite right. You looked closer, and you saw that there was a hair sticking out of the toothpaste lid. Yuck! You decide to write a letter to the Managing Director of the company.

## Cold Pizza Scenario

Suppose you went to a restaurant and ordered pizza. You waited over half an hour for your pizza, and when it arrived, it was cold. You say something to your server, but she just shrugs her shoulders and says, "Oh well, that's what happens sometimes". You decide to write a letter to the manager of the restaurant to complain about the service you received.

## Defective Model Car Scenario

Suppose you bought a model car at a local department store. When you got home, you opened the box and were surprised to discover that many of the car pieces were broken. You decide to write a letter to the manufacturer of the model car to complain about the product and to request that the manufacturer be more careful when shipping and handling merchandise.

## Business Letter Chart

Type of Letter	Audience	Purpose	Desired Course of Action
1.			
2.			
3.			