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## The Power of the Pen: Write a Persuasive Letter



by Rose Garrett

Have you ever gotten a bad can of tuna, or been on the wrong side of a city proposition? How about writing a letter to state your case and demand redress? Didn't think so. But letter-writing is a powerful way to express concerns: more tangible than a phone call or an email, less extreme than an attorney file, it's a throwback to when citizens communicated their concerns using the power of the pen.

For middle school students, letter-writing is even more valuable. They're learning to write persuasively in the classroom, and using evidence to support their assertions. They're also full of opinions about the injustices in their world. So show your child that the pen really is mightier than the sword with this fun writing exercise!

### What You Do:

- First, ask your child what issues he cares about that he would like to change. Is it the quality of the cafeteria food? The amount of homework he receives? Or something more broad, such as animal testing or pollution?
- After you've found your cause, think about who to address your letter to. Is it the school principal? The mayor of your town? Your local congressperson? Find the address, and get an envelope ready.
- Gather the facts. Do some research into the issue and find out as much as you can about the pros and cons. Knowing the other side of the issue will give you an extra leg up in your argument.
- Now's the time to state your case. Remember: writing a good persuasive letter means backing up your opinions with solid evidence. Why is the issue a problem? Who else is affected? What are the experts saying? What do your friends think? Acknowledge the other side of the issue. For example,

you could write, “I understand improving the quality and variety of the cafeteria food may be more expensive for the school system.” Then provide your counterargument: “However, I believe that healthy and happy students are worth the extra cost.”

- Once you've finished your letter, proofread it for spelling errors, grammatical structure, and use of paragraphs. Include your name and address, and send it on its way!

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