



## When a Parent is Away: Helping Children Write Letters

Writing letters is a great way to maintain the relationship between the child and parent. It costs less money than phone calls and video visits. It is also something children can do any time they are thinking of their parent and feel like connecting.



- If you are writing for your child, say the words out loud as you write.
- Allow your child to draw a picture. Even scribbles are great - children are developing their finger & hand muscles.
- Plan to send cards or letters for holidays and special occasions.

### When your child receives a letter

- For young children, show them their name on the letter. Point out that their name begins with the letter \_\_\_\_\_. When your child recognizes the first letter, begin pointing out other letters in their name. As you read the letter together, point to the words.
- For children who can read, stay close to support them. Receiving a letter from their parent may bring up strong feelings.

### Why write letters?

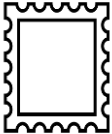
- It builds your **relationship** between the child and parent.
- A letter is a **gift**. It is something the parent can hold and look at when they miss their child.
- Letters **teach** children. Young children learn skills that get them ready to read. Older children practice and strengthen their reading and writing skills.

### When helping your child write a letter

- Talk about what your child wants to tell their loved one. For non-talkers, tell your child what you imagine they might say. For help with ideas, see "Sentence Starters"

### Addressing the Envelope

Check with your facility about mailing guidelines.

Your Name Street Address City, State Zip Code	
Parent's Name & ID# Facility Name Street Address or PO Box City, State Zip Code	

## Sentence Starters

**Here are some ideas to help your child start their letter.**

I am writing this letter to you because...

When I am grown up, I want to...

I remember when...

Here's my drawing of my \_\_\_(happy, surprised, or another emotion)\_\_\_ face.

When I see you next, I would like to \_\_\_\_\_.

Would you like to play I Spy? I Spy a \_\_\_\_\_. (Draw pictures & write 3 I Spy phrases. For example: I Spy a blue raindrop, I Spy a red flower, I Spy a yellow ball.)

When I get a letter from you, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

One of my favorite foods is \_\_\_\_\_.

One thing I am thankful for is \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite thing to do at school is \_\_\_\_\_.

Here's my joke for you.

My favorite book is \_\_\_\_\_.

I like to play \_\_\_\_\_.

A funny thing that happened to me is...