



Letters to Elected Officials

Letters to elected officials give voice to citizen concerns. In these letters, citizens argue persuasively in favor of particular positions or actions. Letters to officials show respect for the office of the governmental position as well as respect for citizen rights.

What do you create?

Write and send a letter to an elected official about a climate change issue that affects your community or region. In your letter, argue voice a strong, well-reasoned argument about the issue. Include a specific call to action for the official to whom it is addressed.

How many points can you earn?

50 points (limit 10 letters)

How do you earn points?

Upload your letter to the official in the file field of the [Upload Form](#).

What You'll Need:

- Typewriter or computer
- Paper, envelope, stamp

Step 1: Find out which officials represent you in your community, province, county, state, or nation.

You can write to local officials (mayors or

city leaders, for example); state leaders (state representatives, senators, magistrates, or prefects, for example); your national representative in Congress, Senate, or Parliament; or your national president, prime minister, or other leader.

Search out not only the names and business addresses for these officials, but also their proper titles. Be sure to use the correct title both on your envelope and in your letter. Learn about the official's positions on climate change or issues related to climate change. Take notes about each official so you can better design an argument that will persuade him or her to take action.

Step 2: Create your argument using your Climate Change Service Project as a guide

Research the climate policies advocated by the elected official you're addressing. As a team, discuss the actions this official has or has not taken. Decide what course of action you believe would be best and decide which arguments would be most effective with this official. Integrate the themes from your debate and your service project into your letter.

Step 3: Draft Your Letter

When you start, write the letter without regard to length or grammatical correctness. Concentrate on the argument and the evidence you present. Write with the official in mind, directing your comments to the specifics of that person's position and authority.

Step 4: Revise your letter

This is the most important step. Ask others to read your letter and offer their advice about how you can make your argument more persuasive. Omit needless words and details; focus on the main idea or ideas you're trying to convey. Remember, elected



officials often have very busy schedules. They will not read long, involved prose. Write concise, direct arguments.

Step 5: Edit your letter carefully

- Edit the tone of your letter; write respectfully and also establish your credibility.
- Edit your letter for accuracy, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and form. This letter is the only way you have to demonstrate your credibility, character, and reliability. The quality of your presentation will go a long way toward the official's assessment of the quality of your ideas!
- Type your letter carefully. Proofread it several times.
- Use a commonly accepted letter format that includes your name(s), address, and contact information. Date your letter.

Step 6: Put your letter in a properly addressed envelope (with your return address!) and mail it.

Get Others Involved

Once you've developed a compelling letter, consider asking others to sign it, too. Circulate your letter among students and other community members. If a significant number of people agree with your position, create a petition for others to sign. Organized petitions with valid signatures are a powerful way to convince elected officials to change their positions.