

How to Write a Letter or Email To Your Representative

Stand out among the hundreds of letters and emails that flood the mailboxes of congresspeople each day.

<https://www.apa.org/advocacy/guide/letter-email>

Email or Letter?

It depends on the urgency of the issue.

Handwritten letters always receive more attention than preprinted materials. So if you are writing about a general inquiry or topic, taking the extra time to send a physical letter may be worth it.

That said, consider the urgency of the matter. If you are writing concerning a pending vote, email is your best option as security screenings may delay receipt of a physical letter by up to three weeks.

What happens to emails and letters once they arrive? A legislative correspondent reads the messages and verifies if the sender is a constituent. Messages are then routed or tallied:

Important or compelling correspondence is given to a legislative assistant. Unique and moving messages are shared with the member of Congress. A summary of emails and letters received is given at an issue briefing before a vote.

9 Essential Tips for Writing Your Congressperson

Write letters only about the issues of greatest importance to you. That way you don't dilute your influence or your message. Each letter should be:

Direct

State your subject clearly in the email subject line or first sentence of the letter. Stick to just one issue in the letter.

Informative

Identify yourself as a constituent. State your views, support them with your expert knowledge and, when appropriate, cite the bill number of relevant legislation (e.g., H.R. 1234 or S.3456).

Inquiring

Ask for the policymaker's point of view and how he or she plans to vote on relevant legislation. Expect an answer to a letter, though it may be a form response. Replies to email vary by office; not all reply.

Factual & Courteous

Rely on the facts, but personalize the issue. Explain how the issue affects your life. Avoid personal attacks, threats of political influence or demands.

Constructive

Be positive about your issue and offer recommendations about how you want the member to address concerns.

Specific

Always explain the hometown relevance of the issue. Use "I" statements and cite specific times and examples.

Helpful

Offer to provide additional information if needed, and provide your contact information.

Appreciative

Remember to thank members for their attention. Follow the issue and thank them later if they vote your way.

Concise

Keep your letter to one page, or your email to 500 words or less.

Take the Next Step

Find out who to contact and stay informed.

WRITE A LETTER

[Find Your Senators](#)

Use the Senate's locator to find your two senators.

WRITE A LETTER

[Find Your Representative](#)

Use the House's locator.

FEELING PASSIONATE?

[Visit Your Congressperson](#)

Contact APA before your visit for additional guidance.

STAY INFORMED

[Psychology Advocacy Network](#)

Identify pressing issues and contact your representatives.