SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Send A Letter

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582208151784

Introduction: Why Sending a Letter Still Matters

In an age dominated by instant messaging, emails, and social media pings, the art of sending a physical letter has become a rare and meaningful act. While it may seem old-fashioned, knowing **how to send a letter** remains an essential life skill for personal correspondence, formal business communication, and even legal documentation. A handwritten note carries a weight that a text message simply cannot replicate—it shows care, effort, and sincerity. Whether you are mailing a thank-you note to a grandparent, submitting a formal application, or sending a greeting card across the country, the process is straightforward once you understand the fundamentals. This guide will walk you through every step of **how to send a letter**, from gathering supplies to ensuring it arrives safely at its destination.

Step 1: Gather the Essential Materials

Before you begin writing or addressing anything, you need the right supplies. The quality of your materials can affect both the appearance of your letter and its likelihood of arriving intact.

What You Will Need

- An envelope – Standard business envelopes (No. 10 size) work for most letters, while smaller A2 envelopes are ideal for greeting cards.
- Writing paper or stationery – Use clean, quality paper that fits comfortably inside your envelope when folded.
- A pen or marker – Choose dark ink (blue or black) for legibility and a professional look.
- A stamp – Postage rates vary by weight, size, and destination, so confirm the correct amount before affixing.
- A return address label or a pen for handwriting it – You can pre-print labels or simply write your address neatly.

Taking a moment to gather everything in one place saves time and prevents last-minute scrambling. If you are mailing something fragile or bulky, consider using a padded envelope or adding extra cardboard for protection.

Step 2: Write or Print Your Letter

The content of your letter is what truly matters. Whether you choose to handwrite or type your message, clarity and tone are key. When learning **how to send a letter**, many people overlook the importance of proper formatting inside the envelope.

Format for Personal Letters

- Date – Place the full date at the top right or left of the page.
- Salutation – Use “Dear [Name],” followed by a comma.
- Body – Write in paragraphs, keeping your tone warm and natural.

- Closing – Sign off with “Sincerely,” “Love,” “Best wishes,” or another appropriate phrase.
- Signature – Sign your name by hand beneath the closing.

Format for Business Letters

- Your contact information – Full name, address, phone number, and email at the top.
- Date – Place it below your contact info.
- Recipient’s contact information – Name, title, company, and full address.
- Salutation – Use “Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]:” with a colon.
- Body – Keep it professional, concise, and to the point.
- Closing – “Sincerely,” “Respectfully,” or “Best regards.”
- Signature block – Leave space for your handwritten signature above your typed name.

Step 3: Fold Your Letter Properly

Folding may seem trivial, but a neatly folded letter creates a good impression and ensures it fits smoothly inside the envelope. For a standard #10 envelope, follow these steps:

1. Place the letter face up on a flat surface.
2. Fold the bottom third of the page upward toward the top.
3. Fold the top third downward, so the top edge meets the bottom fold.
4. Crease each fold sharply with your fingernail.
5. Insert the letter into the envelope with the final fold facing downward so that when the recipient opens it, the text is right-side up.

For smaller envelopes or greeting cards, simply fold the card in half or quarter as needed, ensuring the front design or message remains visible when opened.

Step 4: Address the Envelope Correctly

This is arguably the most critical part of learning **how to send a letter**. An incorrectly addressed envelope can delay delivery or cause your letter to be returned or lost. The format differs slightly depending on whether you are mailing domestically or internationally, but the basic principles remain the same.

Place the Recipient’s Address

Write or print the recipient’s address in the center of the envelope. Use the following format for a standard domestic address:

- Line 1: Recipient’s full name (include title if appropriate, e.g., Dr. Jane Smith)
- Line 2: Street address or P.O. Box number (e.g., 123 Main Street)
- Line 3: City, State abbreviation, and ZIP code (e.g., Springfield, IL 62701)

If you are addressing an envelope to a business, include the company name on a line above the street address. For international letters, add the country name in capital letters on the last line.

Write the Return Address

Your return address should appear in the upper left corner of the envelope. Use the same format as the recipient’s address but with your own details. The return address ensures the letter can be sent back to you if it is undeliverable. Never skip this step, even if you think you know the address by heart.

Affix the Stamp

Place the stamp in the upper right corner of the envelope. Make sure it is firmly attached and not overlapping the edges. If you are using multiple stamps to cover higher postage, arrange them neatly in a row or grid so they do not obscure the return address or recipient address. For standard first-class letters in the United States,

a single Forever stamp usually suffices for envelopes weighing one ounce or less.

Step 5: Determine the Correct Postage

Postage rates change periodically, so it is wise to check the current rates before you mail your letter. The cost depends on three main factors: weight, size, and destination. If your letter is heavier than one ounce or is oddly shaped, it may require additional postage. You can weigh your envelope on a kitchen scale or use a postal scale at the post office. International letters require global forever stamps or the equivalent value in postage for the destination country.

Where to Buy Stamps

- Online – The USPS website allows you to purchase stamps and print shipping labels at home.
- Post offices – Visit any local post office for counter service and self-service kiosks.
- Retail locations – Many grocery stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores sell stamps.
- ATM machines – Some ATMs offer stamp purchases as a service.

When in doubt about postage, take your sealed and addressed envelope to the post office and ask a clerk to verify the correct amount. It is better to pay a few extra cents than to have your letter returned for insufficient postage.

Step 6: Mail Your Letter

With your letter sealed, addressed, and stamped, you are ready to send it on its way. You have several options for how to actually get your letter into the mail stream. Choosing the right method depends on convenience, timing, and security.

Drop It in a Mailbox

The most common and straightforward method is to deposit your letter into a public mailbox. Look for **USPS collection boxes**in your neighborhood; they are typically blue and clearly marked. Make sure the mailbox shows a pickup time on the side, and check that your letter is deposited before that time to ensure it goes out the same day. Collection times vary by location and are often posted on the box itself.

Visit a Post Office

If you have questions about postage or want a receipt for proof of mailing, visiting a post office counter is the best option. You can hand your letter directly to a clerk, pay for postage, and request a certificate of mailing or tracking service for an extra fee. This is especially useful for important documents like contracts, legal notices, or time-sensitive applications.

Use a Mailbox at Your Home or Office

If you have an outgoing mail slot or a flag on your residential mailbox, you can place your letter inside and raise the flag to alert your mail carrier. This method is convenient but relies on your carrier’s daily pickup schedule. For outgoing mail at the office, check with your administrative staff about collection procedures.

International Mailing Considerations

When sending a letter abroad, the process is similar but with a few extra steps. Use **airmail**postage, which is required for most international destinations. Write the country name in capital letters on the last line of the recipient’s address. You may also want to mark the envelope with “AIR MAIL” or “PAR AVION” stickers available at the post office. Delivery times vary widely depending on the destination, ranging from a few days to several weeks.

Step 7: Track Your Letter (Optional)

For standard first-class letters, tracking is not automatically included. However, if your letter contains Certified Mail or Priority Mail services, you can purchase tracking numbers and proof of delivery. Certified Mail is a popular choice for legal documents and official notices because it provides a delivery record and sometimes requires a signature. While these services cost more than a standard stamp, the peace of mind is often worth the investment.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Sending a Letter

Even seasoned letter writers occasionally make errors. Here are the most frequent pitfalls and how to avoid them:

- Omitting the return address – Without it, your letter cannot be returned if undeliverable.
- Illegible handwriting – Print clearly in block letters, especially for the recipient's address.
- Insufficient postage – Always double-check weight and rate before sealing.
- Wrong ZIP code – Use the full five-digit or nine-digit ZIP code for faster delivery.
- Forgetting to include a stamp – This sounds obvious, but it happens more often than you think.
- Sealing the envelope before verifying the address – Read the address one last time before sealing.
- Using an envelope that is too small or too large – Non-standard sizes may require extra postage.

Taking a moment to review each step can save you from costly or frustrating delays.

When and Why You Might Need to Send a Letter

Despite the prevalence of digital communication, there are many situations where sending a physical letter is still the preferred or required method. Here are a few common examples:

- Formal business correspondence – Cover letters, resignations, and official complaints often carry more weight on paper.

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