

WRITING TO YOUR MP

So you've decided to write to your MP, but how do you make your letter or email stand out? Here are a few simple tips for maximising the impact of your correspondence.

USE THE CORRECT TITLE

In the case of letters, set out the name and address of the MP or Senator in the top left hand corner. This is not necessary in the case of emails. An MP's name should be stated in the address as follows: 'Mr/ Mrs/Ms/Dr First Name Last Name MP'. A Senator's name should be stated as follows: 'Senator First Name Last Name'.

MPs or Senators who are, or have been, government Ministers, are given the title 'The Honourable'. In the address, this becomes 'The Hon. Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr First Name Last Name MP' in the case of Ministers who are MPs or 'Senator the Hon. First Name Last Name' in the case of Ministers who are Senators.

Start your letter as follows: 'Dear Sir/Madam' or 'Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr Last Name' in the case of MPs, and 'Dear Senator' or 'Dear Senator Last Name' in the case of Senators. If they are Ministers, then it is 'Dear Minister'.

Complete list of titles

Introduce yourself and your issue

Start your letter out by saying who you are and why you are writing to them. If you are a member of their electorate, make this clear. It can also be helpful to briefly set out any relevant connections in the community – for example, you may want to indicate that you attend a local school or church, are involved in a youth group or Rotary organisation, or work for a local business. If your letter is about a particular region or country and you have visited it, outline this connection.

Keep it brief

Your letter should be as short and simple as possible. Try to keep it to one or two pages. Ideally it should be typed, or written very neatly and signed by hand. Stick to one issue per letter and use simple points to make your case. Write logically in well set out paragraphs.

If the issue is technical or requires further explanation, include an additional document which sets out the extra information. Alternatively, you can refer the MP to a website, article or book where they can get more information. Sending reams of paper is not an effective way of getting attention. In fact, there is a high possibility that most of the information won't be read.

Use your own words

Politicians' offices receive hundreds of letters from constituents. Your objective is to make your letter stand out from the crowd.

Often an organisation will start a campaign and ask its members and supporters to send pre-written letters or emails to their MPs. These are called 'form letters'. While form letters do have

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some value in demonstrating the level of community support or opposition to a particular issue, they do not have the same impact as a well crafted, passionate and personal letter.

If you are asked to send a form letter in support of a particular campaign, take the time to personalise it by adding your own thoughts, or putting the points in your own words.

It can be useful to:

- Include relevant facts and figures
- Refer to a recent news item about the issue
- Highlight a local connection to the issue
- Include a personal experience that made you want to speak up on the issue

Be polite

Being polite and respectful in your letter is far more likely to achieve positive results than being insulting or abusive. If you disagree with a stance your MP has taken, or some comments they have made, say so, but in a reasoned, forthright way. Rather than generating a response, an abusive or threatening letter may be forwarded to the police.

Tell them what you want them to do

Simply telling your MP how you feel about an issue is unlikely to bring about change – you need to tell them what you want them to do about it. This could include any number of actions from voting for or against something in parliament to attending a local event. But, the most important thing you should ask for is a reply to your letter.

[Read more on what you can ask your MP to do.](#)

Provide your contact details

It's no good writing a passionate letter requesting action if you forget to provide your contact details. Make sure your letter includes your first and last name, your address, telephone number, and email address if you have one.

Be patient

It's important to remember that MPs receive hundreds of letters and only have a few staff to assist them in responding to these letters. This means you could experience a lengthy delay in receiving a response to your letter. Sometimes it could take up to a month to hear back from your MP.

Follow up

If you have not received a response after one month, telephone the MP's office to remind them about your letter and check when you are likely to receive a response. If you do not receive a response within a fortnight of your call, try again. And keep trying until you succeed. Persistent, but polite, constituents tend to get what they want! Remember, your MP has a responsibility to represent you and to communicate with you. That is why they were elected and why they are paid.

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Politicians get a lot of letters from organisation's wanting their attention and asking them to do something, but they really want to hear from their local voters.

- Always be polite! This includes using their correct name and title.
- Introduce yourself and your group
- Make it clear your group is either:
 - Made up of people who live in the electorate ; or
 - Operates across a number of areas including the MP's electorate
- Tell them how you feel about the issue related to poverty you're highlighting and recount some of your own experiences if you like. They will pay more attention to a personal letter than a form or template.
- Be short and concise. Try to keep your letter to one or two pages.
- Ask for action. Try to include an action that you would like your MP to take – e.g. raise the issue with their parliamentary colleagues, or speak out on the issue.
- Ask for a response. Include a sentence at the end that states you expect a response e.g.: "we look forward to updating our group and community members on your response at our next meeting"
- Use your own words. There are letter templates which can be used as a guide to help you get started but it's important that you personalise your letter to make it reflect the voice of your group.
- Remember to include your contact details, so they know how to get back in touch