

WRITE AN ISSUE LETTER

Ages 11 to 14 (Level 3)

Description:	The learner will write a persuasive letter about an issue s/he is concerned with using the format of a formal letter.
Leading question:	What is an issue that means a lot to you and that you would like to see changed? What should that change look like?
Age group:	11-14
Subjects:	Civics, Language/Writing
Total time required:	45-60 min/day over 4 days
Self-guided / Supervised activity:	Self-guided
Resources required:	Paper, writing utensils

Day	Time	Activity and Description
1	15 minutes	<p>Brainstorm a list of 5-8 issues that matter to you and that you would like to see changed. This can be an issue that you see in your local community or your country.</p> <p><i>Ideas to get you started:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Theme: Education</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Suggestions to strengthen a sense of community at school</i> ○ <i>Lengthening or shortening the school day, school year, recess period, etc.</i> ○ <i>Improving the local or school library</i> ○ <i>Why students should volunteer more of their time (and to what causes)</i> - <i>Theme: Sports</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Starting an annual local tournament of a certain sport</i> ○ <i>Improving recreational spaces e.g. local football field, basketball court, etc.</i> - <i>Theme: Culture</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Hosting a free community art exhibition or concert</i> ○ <i>Raising funds to create e.g. a local dance group or choir</i> ○ <i>Providing free music lessons to children</i> - <i>Theme: Environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Reducing the use of plastic bags or other disposables</i> ○ <i>Cleaning up an area in your community</i> - <i>Theme: Technology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Increasing access to the internet</i> ○ <i>Making smartphones or computers more affordable</i>

	1 hour	<p>Pick 3-4 issues and draft in bullet points your target audience, the arguments for the change you would like to advocate for, as well as concerns others might have (and how you might address these concerns). For example, perhaps you would like your community to come together and build, grow, or renovate a local library. Write down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Who you are addressing this to (i.e. your target audience). Examples of who this could include your peers, the parents in your community, a school leader, a community leader, etc. B. The change you would like to see. For example, is it that you want more books to be added to the library because it does not have enough books or that the books are only suitable for certain groups of children/students? C. Possible concerns your target audience might have and ways you could address their concerns. Try to put yourself in their schools and consider the issue from their point of view. For example, perhaps someone might be concerned that children are not using the library enough to warrant adding more books. What are some ideas you could provide to address this concern?
	10 minutes	<p>Numeracy extension: Imagine that you decided to write a letter to persuade the authorities to refurbish an old pet rescue center. If you want to replace the carpet of the center's floor, which has the following dimensions length: 10 meters, width: 12 meters. The new carpet will be made of a special resistant material which costs \$50 per meter. What will be the area and cost of the new carpet?</p>
2	5 minutes	<p>Review your drafts from the day before. Pick <u>one</u> issue to write a persuasive, formal letter about.</p>
	10 minutes	<p>Review the following format of a formal letter so that you are familiar with its components:</p> <p><u>STRUCTURE:</u></p> <p>[your name] [address] [other contact information, if available e.g. email address]</p> <p>[date]</p> <p>[recipient's or organization's name] [recipient's or organization's address]</p> <p>[Subject of the letter E.g. Subject: XXXXX]</p>

	1 hour	<p>[greeting E.g. Dear Sir/Madam/Mr./Mrs./etc.],</p> <p>[your message, 3-4 paragraphs long: <i>Paragraph 1: Introduction and purpose</i> <i>Paragraphs 2-3: Details</i> <i>Paragraph 4: Conclusion and what you are expecting]</i></p> <p>[complimentary close E.g. Yours sincerely/Best regards/etc.], [Your signature] [Your name]</p> <p>Using the letter format above and the bullet points you drafted yesterday, write a formal, persuasive letter to a suitable audience about the topic you chose. Keep in mind that your tone would be formal and respectful.</p>
3	30 minutes	<p>Debate: When thinking through a proposal, it can be helpful to ask others to provide different points of view. This can help us improve our suggestions or might raise points we had not previously considered.</p>
	30 minutes	<p>Show your letter to 1 or more family members and have them read it. To prepare for the debate, ask them to think of 3-5 reasons <i>against</i> your proposal. While that is happening, prepare for the debate by coming up with your own reasons someone might be against your proposal and how you might address their concerns.</p>
	15 minutes	<p>Debate format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beginning with you, state and explain your first reason for why you believe your proposal is important and feasible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Your family member(s) will try and counter/argue against the point you just made. - Your family member will state and explain their first reason for why they are against your proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o You will try and address their concern. <p>Repeat this format for a total of 3-5 times.</p> <p>At the end of the debate, reflect on the debate with your family member(s). Were you persuaded by any of their arguments? Were they persuaded by any of yours? Are there any points from today's debate that you might add to your letter to strengthen its persuasiveness? Write those down.</p>
	10 minutes	<p>Numeracy extension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imagine that you have figured out that in order to reduce pollution, your city must reduce plastic bag use to 256 plastic bags per day:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the current daily rate is 455 times this number, and your city also uses 550 other plastic items, what is the current rate of total plastic consumption (plastic bags + other plastic items)? ○ How many plastic bags can a population of 3000 people use per day if your city enforces a ban that allows a total of 256 for the entire city?
4	20 minutes	<p>Review and edit the formal letter you wrote yesterday (when writing anything, the editing process is very important. Stepping away and then returning to your writing is a good way to view your work with fresh eyes and make improvements to it).</p> <p>As best as you can, check that your argument flows well (the points follow each other in a way that makes sense), that grammatical or spelling/writing errors are corrected, and that your tone is appropriate (remember, this is a formal letter you are writing; it should “sound” different and more formal from a letter you are writing to a family member or friend).</p> <p>Include information from yesterday’s debate if you believe it will strengthen your letter. For example, you might include a point you had not thought of or proactively address a concern.</p>
	20 minutes	<p>Show your letter to an adult or older sibling in your home. Have them read it and give you their feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were they convinced by the content of your letter? Why or why not? How could you strengthen the arguments or persuasiveness of your letter? - How was the quality of your writing? Was the argument logical? Did it build on itself in a way that made sense and was easy to follow?
	15 minutes	<p>Based on the feedback you received, make final edits to your letter.</p>
	5 minutes	<p>Numeracy extension: Imagine that you have submitted a proposal to build a new stadium to promote local sports and tourism. The local government likes your proposal but tells you to draft a plan for a stadium that accommodates a maximum of 23% of your city’s population of 50,000. What should the capacity of the stadium be?</p>
5	40 minutes	<p>Congratulations on your well-written letter! You have persuaded the recipient of your letter to agree to your request. S/he wants you to create a plan so that the changes can be put into action. Draft a plan that includes the following information, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long it will take - How many people it will take (and who)?

	<p>50 minutes</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The action steps you are going to take (with details). What are the things that need to happen for your suggestions to take place? Try and be as specific as possible. <p><i>To go back to the example about the library, this could include raising money to buy new books, consulting with teachers and the community about the best books to buy, building more shelves or space in the library to house the new books, and then finding ways to tell the community about the new resources available in the library.</i></p> <p>Turn your letter into a commercial! Now that the recipient of your letter has agreed to your plans, s/he wants you to tell the public (everyone!) about your new plans. S/he thinks the best way to reach the public is to create a persuasive and compelling radio or TV commercial or announcement.</p> <p>The commercial should be at least 30 seconds long. You can include music, dancing, poetry, rhyme, art, etc. to make your commercial interesting and memorable to an audience. At the end of the commercial, your audience should understand the main ideas of your plans.</p> <p>Perform your commercial for family and/or friends!</p>
<p>Assessment Criteria:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The learner will be able to identify at least 1 issue in his/her community that needs change, and articulate the reasons for and against it, as well as any limitations to creating change. - The learner will be able to use the format of a formal letter. - The learner will be able to build a persuasive argument supporting his/her point of view on an issue that needs change. - The learner will be able to think systematically about the steps and cost involved in bringing about the desired change. - The learner will be able to compellingly convey his/her plans to a broader audience. 	
<p>Learning outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The learner will identify issues in his/her community that need change. - The learner will think critically about the arguments for and against creating that change. - The learner will think systematically about the actions needed to make that change happen and any possible limitations related to taking these action steps. - The learner will be able to articulate the format of a formal letter. - The learner will be able to build a logical and persuasive argument. - The learner will be able to use the format of a formal letter to write persuasively about an issue of his/her choice. - The learner will be able to think systematically about the processes and costs of instituting plans for the recommended change. 	

	- The learner will consider ways to capture the attention of the public during a commercial or announcement.
Required previous learning:	Ability to write at a moderate level. Basic addition and multiplication.
Inspiration:	N/A
Additional enrichment activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add to your plan on Day 5. See if you can think through the financial costs and/or savings of putting your requests into action. - How much money it might cost (total + with details) and where this money might come from. For example, calculate the approximate cost of the new books (number of books multiplied by average cost of each book) or the cost of painting the library (number of hours to paint multiplied by the number of people painting, plus the cost of equipment and paint). You can also calculate the amount of money each person in your community might need to donate (total cost divided by number of people). - How much money it might save (total + with details). For example, how much money might parents save on books if their children could borrow books from the library instead? What could they spend the money on instead?