

# Adventure: Wish You Were Here

In this adventure we will explore all kinds of mail (postcards, letters, and more!) and write a postcard to a friend to tell them about our best trip ever!

Age Range: K+ up

Group Size: flexible

Time: 45-90 Minutes

## Adventure Goals:

Our goal for every adventure is for children to have fun with books and reading! In this adventure we will learn about writing and addressing letters and cards, explore pieces of mail to use as “mentor texts” to give them ideas for creating their own postcards.

## Measurable Objectives and Outcomes:

- **Objective:** Participants will write their own postcard or letter.
- **Outcome:** Participants will be able to use letter-writing elements discussed during the adventure.
- **Objective:** Participants will explore actual letters and postcards, as well as books about mail.
- **Outcome:** Participants will choose a book to read or borrow.

## Adventure Outline:

Letters and postcards allow kids to communicate with others to share news, stories, and more. In this adventure we will:

- Talk about the elements of writing a letter or postcard
- Read *Meerkat Mail* (or the sample letter found in Additional Resources) aloud
- Explore letters, postcards, and books about mail
- Create postcards to take home

## Supplies:

- A large selection of letters, postcards, and books about mail so that all participants have choices that match their reading level, interests, and language needs. See: book suggestions
- A letter to use as a read-aloud (see Additional Resources for sample letter)
- Large flipchart or whiteboard for the leader to write on, and appropriate markers
- Drawing and writing supplies: pencils, pens, markers, crayons, etc.
- Blank postcard templates: enough copies for all participants to use one during the adventure and to take one home (Templates can be found in Additional Resources)
- Stamps

## Adventure Considerations:

- How will you set up your program space?
- Will you print the postcard templates on cardstock or regular paper?
- Where in the space will participants write their postcards?
- How will supplies be distributed? (Waiting on prepared tables? Handed out mid-activity?)

Adventure Plan	Navigation
<p><b>Hook: Letters we give and receive (3-5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Tell the group about how you love to send postcards to your friends and family when you go on vacation. Tell them what you like the postcards to look like and what you share in the note to your friend.</p> <p>Think: Ask participants to think about letters and cards they send and receive. Give participants about 1 minute of thinking time.</p> <p>Question: What kinds of letters and cards have you sent? What kind have you been given? (Write this question on large flipchart or whiteboard.)</p> <p>After about 1 minute of thinking time, have participants to volunteer answers. If they need help getting started, ask if they have received birthday party invitations or sent thank you cards. Write their answers on the flipchart or whiteboard.</p> <p><b>Getting Started: Letter Read-Aloud (10 minutes)</b></p> <p>Read a book or letter aloud to the group. This could be <i>Meerkat Mail</i> by Emily Gravett, the letter found in Additional Resources, or another book or letter of your choice.</p> <p><b>Before Reading:</b> Show a page from the book that contains common letter-writing elements (mailing address, stamp, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Draw attention to the stamps and mailing address on the page. Ask participants if they recognize these elements. You could ask questions like “Have you seen a stamp? Where is it usually placed on the envelope or postcard?” Define elements as needed.</li> </ul> <p><b>While Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act it out! Use different voices for characters and emphasize sound effects. Have participants help you with the sound effects.</li> <li>● Use your finger to show where you are in the text, as well as where the letter is and where the address is.</li> <li>● Talk about the pictures and have participants make predictions about what</li> </ul>	<p><b>Variation:</b> When selecting your read-aloud consider an ebook to model <a href="#">joint media engagement</a> with families and caregivers.</p>

will happen next.

- Rephrase and expand on participants' thoughts to enhance language skills and vocabulary without overly correcting.
- Things to try: validating individual views; connecting observations; restating with rich vocabulary; and pointing out differences of opinion.
- As you read the story, ask comprehension and [open-ended questions](#) make comments about the setting and sequence of events, and elicit responses from the participants when appropriate.

**After Reading:** Discuss what participants thought about the story, and clarify the story as needed.

Consider including the following elements:

- Elicit participants' thoughts about the story: eg. what they liked and didn't like; what was surprising to them.
- Encourage participants to make connections to their own lives or other things that they have read, listened to, watched, etc.

## Book Browsing Time (10 minutes)

This is a time for participants to browse through the selection of books you have gathered in the program space and to select a few to read and/or borrow.

### Open Exploration:

This is where you invite participants to select books and read them either silently or with a caregiver. Invite caregivers to participate by browsing books themselves and/or reading with/to their child(ren). Walk around and help participants find good books for them. Encourage participants to:

- Try out multiple books to figure out a book that will work for them.
- Pick a book or two to borrow!

Towards the end of the book browsing time, invite participants to share about a book that they just looked at with another participant. Consider including [sentence prompts](#) to help participants as needed.

Example Sentence Prompts:

- I picked....
- You should try this book because....
- This is my favorite part of the book because....

## Adventure: Creating Postcards (30-40 minutes)

Guide participants through making their own postcards!

### Brainstorming:

On the large flipchart or whiteboard, draw a large postcard template (see template in Additional Resources). Ask participants where the address, stamp, letter, etc. should go on the postcard. Label appropriately. You can also talk about how you need the name, street address, city, state, and zip code for the person you would

### Time Management Short on Time?:

Consider using a bell or call and response clap after about a minute to let participants know when to switch and let their partner talk.

Sentence prompts give structure that supports young children, reluctant speakers, and those learning English to share their ideas. You can allow participants to alter and/or deviate from these prompts depending on their need.

<p>send the postcard to. Also have participants brainstorm their perfect vacation and what kind of picture they would want on their postcard.</p> <p><b>Writing:</b> Say: Now it's time to draw and write your own postcard. You can draw a picture on one side that shows what kind of make-believe vacation you went on, and on the other side, you can write your letter and address your postcard. Your letter can include words and pictures—it's up to you. Don't worry about spelling all of the words correctly—just focus on sharing what was the best part of your make-believe vacation. Encourage participants to write (if they know how) in whatever language they are most comfortable with.</p> <p><b>Make sure everyone has access to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postcard templates</li> <li>• Pencils</li> <li>• Colored pencils/markers/crayons</li> <li>• Stamps (optional)</li> </ul> <p>Move around the room and help participants as needed. Make sure participants and caregivers know that this is a time to explore writing creatively, and not to worry about perfect spelling and grammar. Encourage participants to develop their postcard by asking open-ended questions and prompting them to think creatively about their work.</p> <p><b>Wrap-up/Share: What was your vacation? (5-10 minutes)</b></p> <p>During the last few minutes, ask if any participants want to share their postcard. Have them describe the picture they drew and/or read the note they wrote. If it isn't clear, ask for more details about their make-believe vacation.</p>	<p>Extend the brainstorming session by doing the activity all together as a group before participants try it on their own.</p> <p>See Variations and Extended Learning for different ways you can have participants create postcards.</p> <p><b><u>Family Engagement Message:</u></b> Just as it is important for kids to read environmental print (signs, menus, cereal boxes), it's important that they also create their own environmental print! In this case, it's a postcard.</p>
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## Variations and Extended Learning

#### Variation: BYO Postcards

- If you're short on time and want the kids to focus on writing the note and addressing the postcard, bring a stash of real postcards. You can often find very inexpensive postcards at antique and thrift stores.

#### Variation: Write to favorite author or book character

- Instead of writing about a make-believe vacation, have participants create a postcard for their favorite author or book character.

#### Variation: Writing letters

- If you have a more advanced group of participants, have them write letters, create stationery, and/or address envelopes.

#### Variation: Postcards for a Cause

- You can also have kids make and send postcards for [hospitalized kids](#) and [members of the military](#).

#### Online Postcard Creation Resources:

- Online postcard creator: <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/postcard/>
- More postcard templates: <https://tinkerlab.com/printable-postcards-for-kids-download-pdf/>

#### Family Extension Activity: Finding a pen pal

- Share with caregivers the idea of finding a pen pal for their child(ren). This resource has some good tips about getting an international pen pal: <https://kidworldcitizen.org/pen-pal-programs/>

#### Passive Program Idea: Postcard Creation Station

- A poster or handout that shows common postcard elements and an example of a postcard.
- Supplies, including printed postcard templates, pencils, colored pencils, markers, and stamps.
- Plenty of books for participants to browse and checkout (see Book Browsing Suggestions).

## Vocabulary

- Address: a direction to an intended person, written on or attached to a piece of mail; often includes building number, street name, city, state, zip code, and maybe the country
- Stamp: paid postage that allows for a letter or card to travel from one place to another
- Zip code: in the United States, this is a 5-digit number that is added to a postal address to help the sorting of mail

## Read-aloud and Book Browsing Suggestions

- *Atentamente, Ricitos de Oro* by Alma Flor Ada
- *The Jolly Postman, Or, Other People's Letters* by Janet Ahlberg
- *It Came in the Mail* by Ben Clanton
- *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin
- *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt (Spanish edition: *El día que los crayones renunciaron*)
- *Dear Dragon* by Josh Funk
- *Write To Me: Letters from Japanese American Children to the Librarian They Left Behind* by Cynthia Grady
- *Meerkat Mail* by Emily Gravett
- *Toot and Puddle* by Holly Hobbie
- *Dear Mr. Blueberry* by Simon James
- *Las cartas especiales de la abuela* by Jacqueline Jules
- *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *Ask Dr. K. Fisher About Animals* by Claire Llewellyn
- *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan
- *Dear Juno* by Soyung Pak
- *The Quiet Place* by Sarah Stewart
- *Dear Mrs. Larue: Letters from Obedience School* by Mark Teague

## Family Engagement

- When you go on a vacation, whether it's to Hawaii, the coast, or downtown Portland, pick up a postcard and write it as a family to mail to another person.
- For children who have a hard time expressing their feelings in the moment, encourage them to take the time to write you a letter. They might have an easier time when they don't feel put on the spot.
- Encourage families to write letters or notes to each other on a regular basis (however often and in whatever language works best for that family).

## Messages for Caregivers

### Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are questions that don't have a single "right" answer, like "yes" or "it's green." Asking kids [open-ended questions](#) helps them develop language as well as critical thinking and communication skills.

### Connecting reading to real life: What do you already know?

Asking kids to connect what they are reading to past experiences, or to people, places, and things they know, increases comprehension and makes reading meaningful. (It may also help them better understand issues they are dealing with in real life.)



### **Useful daily reading**

Reading labels, recipes, instructions, letters, and other informational text helps kids develop necessary and satisfying life skills. This kind of reading is just as important as reading books!

### **Useful daily writing**

Writing grocery lists, to-do lists, notes to other people, and other “practical” writing is a necessary and satisfying life skill. This kind of writing is just as important as creative and school writing!

### **Be a reading (and writing) role model!**

We’ve all noticed that kids tend to do and say what they see their important adults do and say. It’s great to read and write with your kids -- but also, make sure they see you reading and writing for yourself! And make sure they hear you talking about what you read and write.

### **The reading/writing connection**

When children read their own writing (whether we write it down for them or they write it themselves), they are more engaged in the *reading* of those words and ideas. When children write about their own ideas and what’s meaningful to them, they are better able to make sense of the print.

## Additional Resources

Fostering Readers postcard template [see attached Publisher file]

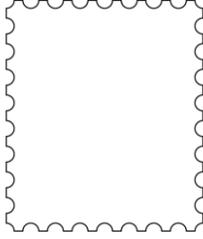
Sample letter:

January 3, 2018

Dear Mom,

Yesterday I arrived in Hawaii, and so far it's amazing! My hotel room looks out over the ocean, I'm about a ½ mile away from the trailhead, and there's a market just a few blocks away that has fresh produce, seafood, and cute souvenirs. So far I've just sat on the beach and eaten delicious food (have you ever heard of Malasadas—they're Portuguese donuts!). But today I'm going snorkeling, and tomorrow I'm going hiking to a few waterfalls. Wish you were here!

Love,  
Lena



Mirna Roberts (Mom)

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111 Brooks Dr.

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Beaverton, OR 97007

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## Supporting Research

- Best Practice in Reading and Writing Key Finding 5: Access to, choice in, and time spent reading and discussing engaging text increases reading achievement.
- Best Practice in Reading and Writing Key Finding 6: Interactive read alouds increase reading engagement, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Best Practice in Reading and Writing Key Finding 7: Ensuring children are immersed in language and reading aloud helps develop reading readiness.
- Best Practice in Reading and Writing Key Finding 18: To acquire language children need to be immersed in meaningful and authentic language opportunities.
- Library and Afterschool Program Models Key Finding 3: Centering books and reading in programming improves children's attitudes toward reading and books.
- Library and Afterschool Program Models Key Finding 17: Since writing is key to reading/literacy, libraries should offer playful creative writing programming for K-3 kids.
- Equity Key Finding 4: Opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives can help immigrants and refugees feel more welcome.