



Grandparent Letters

Letter 1: Affection and Friendship

Goals

This letter will help you and your grandchild get to know each other better. By showing interest in the child and by revealing some interesting things about yourself, you can begin to build a rewarding relationship. Children are interested in you. They would like to learn about your past and your current interests and activities. They also want you to know about the big events in their lives.

These children want to reach out to others, but they need patient, accepting adults who will support their efforts. Remember, no matter how well you know someone, there is always something interesting you can discover about him or her.

Activities

1. Write your first letter to your grandchild.
 - Talk about things you like and dislike.
 - Describe your life as a child. What did you enjoy doing then? What were your friends like?
 - Describe your current friends. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Draw a picture for your grandchild's scrapbook.
 - On a piece of paper, draw a picture of you and your grandchild doing something together.
 - On the back or the bottom of this picture, describe what you are doing together. Why is it fun?
 - You may also mention some other things you would like to do with your grandchild.
3. Write in your journal.
 - Make your first entry after completing your first letter to your grandchild. Remember that the journal provides you with an opportunity to speak to your grandchild as an adult. Why did you decide to try this correspondence program? List the reasons. Describe your reactions to the activities you did. What kind of feelings did you experience? What thoughts went through your mind?
 - Make your second entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. How did your grandchild respond to your first letter?
4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 1 on his or her instruction sheet.



Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Construct a "me" mobile.

- Use symbols of special things you treasure: family, friends, foods, favorite things, and so forth. To make a simple mobile, tie your objects to a coat hanger with string or yarn. Use small objects, drawings, or pictures for your symbols. Attach these objects with glue or tape to cardboard or heavy paper and cut into different shapes. Punch a hole in the top of each symbol and attach a piece of yarn or string to it. On the back of each symbol, write a brief description of why it is special. Attach a note telling your child how to make the symbols into a mobile.

6. Take your grandchild on an imaginary home tour.

- Draw one or more pictures of your home on a sheet of paper or attach some photos of it to the paper. Take your grandchild on an imaginary tour by describing your home in detail. Do you live in an old house? Does it have an attic? Is it small or large?
- Describe other places you have lived.

Letter 2: Family and Heritage

Goals

Children's attitudes toward the life cycle can be deeply affected by their contact with older adults. Their feelings about their own future will be influenced by the way their grandparents approach life.

Children also want to establish some sense of connection with the past. What was it like before they were born? What did their parents and grandparents do when they were young? In a child's eyes, grandparents are living examples of change and history because they have seen so many things and have experienced so much of what life has to offer. Only the older generation can provide children with a glimpse of living history as seen by people who were really there.

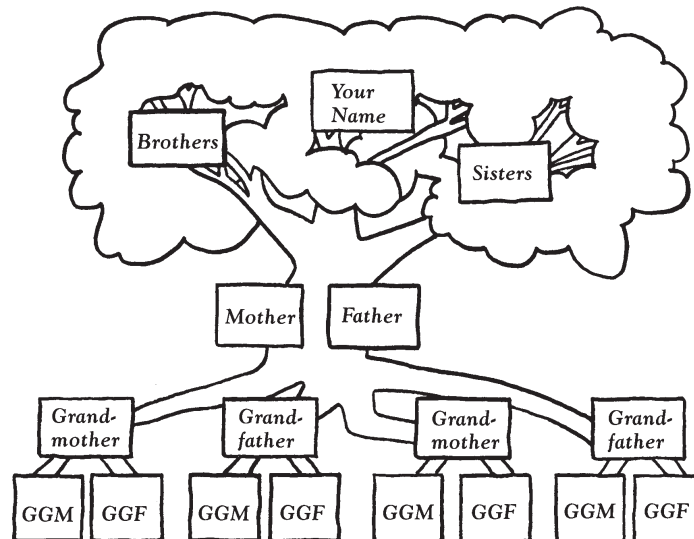
Activities

1. Write your second letter.

- Where and when were you born? Where did you grow up? How many brothers and sisters did you have? What did your parents do for a living?
- Discuss your experiences of growing up: games, sports, school, work, and exciting events.
- Talk about some of the dramatic changes that have occurred since you were a child: television, jet planes, computers, etc.
- Include anything else you think is important or interesting.

2. Construct your family tree for your grandchild's scrapbook.

- Sketch a tree on a piece of paper. Label the branches and roots on your family tree as shown on the illustration below.
- Write your complete name and the names of your mother and father on the tree trunk.
- Trace your roots on your mother's and father's sides of the family.



- Try to include the birth (maiden) names of all female ancestors.
3. Write in your journal.
 - After completing your second letter, describe some of the events of your past that you think your grandchild would like to know about when he or she reaches adulthood. Mention any stories your parents or other relatives may have told you. Talk about what life was like when you grew up.
 - After receiving your grandchild's second letter, identify some of the things your grandchild likes to do and contrast them with what children that age did when you were young.
 4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 2 on the Grandletters/Grandchildren instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Decorate your scrapbook.
 - If you completed the "me" mobile in the first letter, use the symbols to decorate the cover of your scrapbook.
6. Share a family picture with your grandchild.
 - Find an old picture of yourself or of your parents that you would be willing to share, or have another photo made from your copy or negative.
 - Place this picture on a sheet of paper, and write a brief explanation of the picture.
7. Create a pictorial lifeline for yourself.
 - On a long strip of paper, draw a heavy horizontal line representing "life."
 - Mark "birth" and your birth date at the left end.
 - Mark significant points on the life line with pictures, mementos, or brief descriptions to signify the events.
8. Send something from the past to your grandchild.
 - Send a picture or description of something owned or made by an ancestor.
 - Tell the name of the ancestor and his or her relationship.
 - Include a description of how the object was made or used.
9. Share a family recipe.
 - If you have a traditional food or dish that your mother or grandmother prepared, send the recipe to your grandchild.
 - Explain how the food became a tradition in your family.

Letter 3: Generosity and Love

Goals

Grandparents can help grandchildren learn that the bonds of affection and friendship can be strengthened by sharing and sacrifice. In today's materialistic world, we need to find ways to nurture generosity in children. From being in contact with you, children can discover the meaning of the maxim: "A little bit of fragrance clings to the hands of one who gives another roses."

Activities

1. Write your third letter.
 - Talk about people in your life who have made a difference because of their caring and generosity.
 - Discuss generosity. You might tell about times that you gave to others and your feelings about giving.
 - What are some qualities you see in people you love? Why are these qualities important?
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Make a "love flower" for your grandchild's scrapbook.
 - Cut out a circle from construction paper, and write your grandchild's name in the middle. Add petals, leaves, and a stem.
 - On each of the leaves and petals, write something you like or appreciate about your grandchild.
 - Glue this "love flower" to a piece of paper.
 - Briefly explain your flower on the back.
3. Write in your journal after completing letter 3.
 - In this entry, describe your ideas and feelings about generosity and friendship. What kinds of experiences did you have as a child that influenced your attitudes toward giving?
 - Write another entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. How did your grandchild feel about love and generosity?

4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 3 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make a gift for your grandchild. (Choose any of the listed suggestions.)
 - Make a jigsaw puzzle of yourself, your house, or something else you value. Paste the picture on heavy paper or lightweight cardboard. Cut it into a variety of shapes for the “puzzle pieces.”
 - Make a bookmark from felt, pasting on your grandchild’s initials, or make a bookmark “mouse.” Cut an oval of felt, and add felt eyes and ears. Glue on a strand of yarn for a tail.
 - Paint a picture on a scrap of wood.
6. Write a poem or a story.
 - Create a poem or write a short story describing an experience you had with giving. You could illustrate it with your own drawings or with pictures cut from magazines.
7. Mail one-a-day love packages.
 - Send four or five small packages or envelopes for your grandchild to open on certain days. You might include treats, stickers, notes, small trinkets, or I.O.U.s for future activities. On each package, specify when it is to be opened, and include an explanatory note.

Letter 4: Responsibility and Courage

Goals

Overcoming fear and accepting responsibility are two of life’s struggles. Every step of development requires us to cope with new challenges and uncertainties. Older adults can nurture a spirit of perseverance and a strength of will that will enable children to face many of life’s difficulties.

Activities

1. Write your fourth letter.
 - Discuss courage and the times when you acted courageously, especially when you

were younger. These acts of bravery need not be dramatic. Sometimes the most difficult acts are quiet and unrecognized, such as refusing to ridicule someone when everyone else does.

- Discuss responsibility and courage in professions such as policemen, firemen, doctors, and nurses.
 - Talk about responsibility and chores (washing dishes, taking out trash, babysitting). Emphasize that you have done these things because they are responsibilities and that these tasks are necessary even though they may not be enjoyable.
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Write or draw something for your grandchild’s scrapbook. (Choose either or both activities.)
 - On a sheet of paper, complete a sentence such as, “It takes a lot of courage to...” or “Responsibilities are important because...” Illustrate your statements with drawings or pictures from magazines.
 - Write a poem or a short story about courage.
 3. Write in your journal after completing your fourth letter.
 - Describe some courageous moments you had as you were growing up. Be as specific as possible.
 - Describe some of the responsibilities you are facing as you become older.
 - Write another entry after you receive your grandchild’s return letter. Do you believe courage and responsibility are important? If so, why? How did your grandchild respond to the issue?
 4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 4 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make a treasure box.
 - Decorate a small box as a container for a special treasure.
 - Leave the decision to your grandchild for what to put inside the box.

- Enclose a note with a brief explanation of the box and its purpose.
6. Reveal a future fantasy.
- Draw a picture or write a story about something you would like to do in the future or when you “grow up.”
 - Write a brief explanation of how courage or responsibility may play an important part in this dream.

Letter 5: Respect for Elders

Goals

Research shows that children generally have a dim view of aging. Although they have a great deal of esteem for older adults, children are afraid of growing older themselves. The stereotype of infirmity and passivity during later years is common among children, but those who have contact with senior citizens are less likely to have a negative stereotype of aging. Being close to a grandparent, for example, might provide personal experience with someone who is aging gracefully and with dignity. When children view elderly friends as persons, the negative stereotype diminishes. By becoming involved in their lives, you can help children realize that aging is no tragedy and that they can look forward with hope and confidence to their own future.

Activities

1. Write your fifth letter.
 - Emphasize the idea that people can continue learning and enjoying life throughout their later years. Each stage of life signals a change—new opportunities emerge as previous activities become less important. People can be creative and childlike at any age.
 - Tell about some of the fun activities you and your friends take part in.
 - Mention some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up.
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Make something for your grandchild’s scrapbook.
 - Look through several magazines to find pictures of older adults involved in various

kinds of activities. Cut them out and paste the pictures onto paper. If you cannot find any pictures, draw a picture of an activity you enjoy.

- Write brief explanations of these activities.
3. Write in your journal after completing your fifth letter.
 - Describe what growing older has meant to you. What are some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up? How have you responded to these changes?
 - After receiving your grandchild’s return letter, make another entry. Are there any important ideas about aging you would like to mention to your grandchild? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?
 4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 5 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make a mosaic.
 - Save eggshells; wash and dry them. Dip the eggshells in food coloring, using several colors. After spreading them out to dry, crush the eggshells into small pieces.
 - Draw a design on a sheet of paper and glue the colored eggshells in a mosaic pattern.
 - Write a brief explanation of mosaics and tell how tile mosaics have lasted for centuries as decorations on buildings.
6. Highlight senior citizens’ handwork.
 - Show your grandchild pictures of several objects made by the elderly in your community or by yourself. Attach these pictures to paper and include brief descriptions of them.
 - Emphasize to your grandchild that these things are possible because of the years of experience an older person can apply to the work.
7. Make a “grandpicture.”
 - Draw a portrait of your grandchild.
 - Write a brief description of what you like about him or her.

Letter 6: Honesty and Commitment

Goals

The fabric of our society is held together by the trust we have in each other. Each of us moves through the day expressing confidence in others and demonstrating our own trustworthiness. For example, when we drive a car, eat in a restaurant, and leave our children with a babysitter, we place trust in others. In our childrearing practices, we typically place much emphasis on this dependability.

We want our children to recognize the importance of giving their word to others. In their relationships with children, older adults can nurture this sense of responsibility.

Activities

1. Write your sixth letter.
 - Describe what a lie and dishonesty mean.
 - Describe a time in your childhood when you lied. How did you feel about lying? Did you get caught?
 - Describe a situation when someone lied to you. How did this make you feel? Do you trust that person today?
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Make a drawing for your grandchild's scrapbook.
 - Draw the outline of several balloons on a piece of paper. Inside each balloon write a truthful statement, such as "I really like you," or "I am your Grandma."
 - In a brief explanation, stress that telling a lie to someone is like popping a balloon—one moment we think we have something, but the next moment, it is no longer there.
3. Write in your journal after completing letter 6.
 - Describe some of your strong beliefs about honesty and commitment. Do we always have to be completely honest? Can honesty ever be cruel?
 - Make another entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. What kinds of principles related to these issues do you hope your grandchild will acquire as he or she grows older?
4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 6 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make a "balloon person."

- Write your grandchild's name on a balloon with a felt-tipped marker and draw his or her picture on it. Attach the balloon to a piece of paper with tape.
- Write a short note asking your grandchild to watch the picture change as the balloon is blown up.
- Make a list of the ways you keep special commitments to your friends.

6. Tell tall tales.

- This activity may work better if an audio-cassette recorder is used. Playing this game is a humorous way to encourage your grandchild to reflect on the truthfulness of what he or she says. Emphasize that although tall tales can be fun to make up, they can hurt if the stories mislead others or harm them.
- Tell your grandchild that you are going to say something, and he or she will have to guess if it is true or false. Be outrageous in your descriptions, making up elaborate stories.
- Ask your grandchild to guess which stories are true and which are false, and then reveal the correct answers at the end.

Letter 7: Helpfulness

Goals

To teach children to be helpful, we have to do at least two things. First, we have to help them learn the skills involved in helping others with various tasks; second, we have to give them opportunities to practice being helpful even when their efforts may not contribute to completing the task. For example, to learn how to clean up after dinner, children have to know how to clear the table, wipe it clean, and wash and dry the dishes. Someone has to show or tell them how to do these things. Also, someone has to encourage them to help with mealtime cleanup even though their "help" may cause more work at first.

Because older adults may have more time and patience than some parents, they can be especially effective in nurturing a sense of helpfulness in children.

Activities

1. Write your seventh letter.
 - Discuss things that people do for you that you feel are helpful. Talk about acceptable ways to help someone else.
 - Give suggestions of things your grandchild can do to help his or her parents, neighbors, teachers, and friends.
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Make a drawing for your grandchild's scrapbook.
 - Draw a picture of you helping your grandchild with a task. At the bottom of the page, identify what is happening in the picture.
3. Write in your journal after completing letter 7.
 - Talk about some of the people who helped you while you were growing up. What did they do? What effect did they have on you?
 - Talk about the importance of helping. Why should a person learn to help others?
 - Make another entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. How have your grandchild's letters helped you? How have yours helped him or her?
4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 7 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Go for a nature walk.
 - On a walk, look for interesting twigs, rocks, leaves, etc.
 - Arrange the rocks and other things to make "helpful people" or objects.
 - Add decorative touches with paint to indicate eyes, nose, hair, and other body features.
6. Make handprints.
 - Paint your hands' palms and fingers.
 - Make a print of your hands on a sheet of paper.

- Explain at the bottom of the page the many ways your hands can be helpful.

Letter 8: Competition and Justice

Goals

Children sometimes lose sight of an important goal of competition: one's own improvement. Research shows that elementary school children can become so preoccupied with winning that they are willing to sacrifice their own personal gain to ensure failure by others. We can help children realize that learning and personal growth should never be sacrificed for winning and that competition can be used as a challenge to improve rather than as an opportunity to defeat someone else.

Activities

1. Write your eighth letter.
 - Talk about competition, possibly as it relates to sports or exhibiting at fairs. Tell how you felt when you competed.
 - Talk about good and bad competition and about good and bad winners and losers.
 - Talk about competition and how it can be used as a challenge to improve.
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Make a first-place ribbon for your grandchild's scrapbook. (Do either or both of the activities listed.)
 - Enlarge the illustration of a first-place ribbon on a piece of construction paper. Cut it out, then make a number 1 or put 1st place in the center.
 - Gather a length of ribbon and cover a button with ribbon, making a number 1 in the center. Attach the gathered ribbon to the button to make a rosette. Attach streamers at the bottom with glue. Attach the ribbon to a piece of paper for the scrapbook.



- On the paper, write the reasons why you think your grandchild is number 1 for you.
3. Write in your journal after completing letter 8.
- How do you feel about competition? What was your experience with competition and cooperation as a child? Can you remember and describe any childhood incidents that made an impression on you?
 - Make another entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. Are there any ideas about winning and losing that you would like to convey? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?
 - Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 8 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make collages to compare.
- Cut small, angular pieces from assorted colors of tissue paper. Glue an overlapping collage design onto paper or cardboard. Frame it.
 - On the back of the picture, offer suggestions to your grandchild on how to improve on your collage or create his or her own collage to send to you.
 - Explain how the collages can be different, emphasizing that each will be special in its own way. Also, each will show the abilities and interests of the person who made it.
6. Improve competition.
- Make a list of activities that you compete in. After each item, write a brief explanation of ways you can improve in this activity.

Letter 9: Conflict and Violence

Goals

Power is both fascinating and frightening to children. In the world of adults, children may resent their own positions of weakness and vulnerability. In their relationships with their friends, children seek to establish a position of influence and strength typically overlooked or minimized by adults. We can help children learn that they really do have something to offer others and that

their emerging sense of power can be harnessed to serve positive ends. Older adults can nurture this outlook in children.

Activities

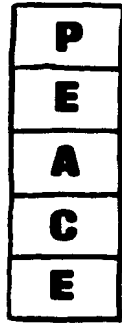
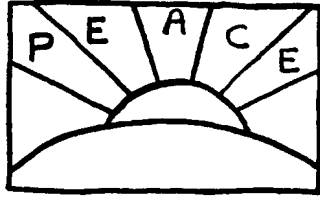
1. Write your ninth letter.
- Discuss ways to resolve conflicts. What are some good and bad ways to resolve conflicts? How do you resolve your conflicts or problems?
 - Talk about peace and your wartime memories, if you have any.
 - Tell about a time when you were involved in a fight or some other conflict when you were young. What happened? How did you resolve the conflict?
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.
2. Draw a picture for your grandchild's scrapbook.
- Draw a picture of a time when you were in a fight and hurt by someone during your childhood. At the bottom of your picture, describe what happened to you and how you resolved the conflict, if at all.
3. Write in your journal after completing letter 9.
- Talk about your ideas and feelings regarding conflict, peace, and cooperation. What experiences did you have in growing up that influenced your opinions on these issues?
 - Make another entry after you receive your grandchild's return letter. How did your grandchild react to this topic?
4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
- Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 9 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make up your own secret code.
- You, the grandparent, will make up simple symbols for the first 13 letters of the alphabet.
 - Keep a copy of the code for yourself and send a copy to your grandchild.
 - Ask him or her to make up symbols for the remaining 13 letters and send you a copy of them.

- Now you can send “secret” messages to each other using the symbols.
6. Make a peace banner.
- The supplies you will need are fabric or felt, colored paper or plain paper, and crayons or watercolors.
 - Decide on a peace design, such as those illustrated below.
 - Using the design, create a peace banner.



Letter 10: Sadness and Grief

Goals

Loss is not easy to accept at any age. Children may have a particularly difficult time dealing with death because they do not understand the long-range implications of what has happened. Because they have experienced more of life, older adults can share their experiences with young people, which may help them. Also, from their position of authority, seniors can encourage children to express honest grief and respond with care to the suffering of others. Older adults can help children understand that expressing sadness is one way to heal a hurt.

Activities

1. Write your 10th letter.
 - Describe some of the things a person might do to express sadness, such as crying, going for a quiet walk, talking to someone, or praying.
 - Talk about some of the times you were sad and what you did to deal with your feelings.
 - Talk about things that make you happy.
 - Include anything else you think is important or interesting.

2. Make a picture for your grandchild’s scrapbook.
 - Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner across a sheet of paper. Paste a yellow construction paper sun in the upper half and a blue construction paper cloud on the lower half.
 - Cut out pictures from magazines that portray something that brightens or saddens you.
 - Paste these pictures on the page under the sun or the cloud, depending on the feeling you assign them.
 - On the back of the page, explain why these things brighten or sadden you.
3. Write in your journal.
 - Make your first entry after completing your 10th letter to your grandchild.
 - Describe some of your ideas about sadness. How have you coped with losses in your life? How did your parents react to loss?
 - Write another entry after you receive your grandchild’s return letter.
 - How did your grandchild react to this topic?
 - When you complete your journal, send it to your grandchild’s parents for safekeeping until your grandchild reaches adulthood.
4. Mail activities 1 and 2 and any additional optional activities (listed below) to your grandchild.
 - Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 10 on his or her instruction sheet.

Additional Optional Activities

(Choose as many of these as you wish.)

5. Make “feelings” badges.
 - Design badges of various sizes and shapes.
 - Attach labels of feelings (examples: sad, excited, or happy) to them.
 - Find pictures in magazines to match these feelings.
6. Draw a “tree of life.”
 - Draw the trunk and branches of a tree on a large sheet of paper. Make some leaves of construction paper. Label some of the leaves with names of living things. Attach these to the branches.

- Label the other leaves with names of things that have died, and place them on the ground under the tree.
7. Make stationery.
- Make decorated notepaper from folded sheets of paper.
 - Collect tiny flowers ahead of time and press them.
 - Glue these onto the stationery, or use crayons or markers to draw flowers on the stationery.



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