

NONFICTION: "Dogs vs. Terrorists" • SKILL: Writing a Persuasive Letter, page 1 of 2

How to Write a Persuasive Letter

At the end of "Dogs vs. Terrorists," we ask you to imagine that you are the police chief in your town, and that you want to create a canine unit. We ask you to write a persuasive letter to the mayor explaining why this is a great idea. Follow the guidelines below to write an outstanding letter.

► Research

The more informed you are about your topic, the more effective your letter will be.

1. Read the article "Dogs vs. Terrorists" to learn about police dogs and why they are effective at law enforcement. Use the worksheet "[Sniff Out the Details](#)" to help you take notes.
2. If you want additional information, watch the videos "[The Dog Squad](#)," "[NYPD Dogs](#)," and "[Military Dogs Highly Versatile](#)," and view the image from the slide show "[War Dog](#)." Use the worksheet "[Video Questions](#)" to help you take notes.
3. Review the notes you've taken so far.

► Consider Your Reader

To write an effective persuasive letter, you need to get inside your reader's mind. Ask yourself what points would be MOST effective in persuading *that particular person* to take the action you desire. How could the action you desire benefit that person? What concerns might he or she have?

In this case, your reader is the mayor, who is in charge of the town. In what specific ways would a canine unit benefit the town? the mayor? What concerns might the mayor have about creating a canine unit? Brainstorm answers to these questions. You will include these in your letter.

Now go back to the notes you took on the worksheets "Video Questions" and "Sniff Out the Details." Circle the points that will be most effective in convincing the mayor that starting a canine unit is a good idea. Be sure to include these details as supporting evidence in your letter.

► Write As If the Reader Is on Your Side

When writing a persuasive letter, don't treat the reader like an enemy. Your letter will be much more effective if you assume that you and the mayor have the same goals. Then all you have to do is explain how your fabulous idea will help the mayor reach those goals!

► Be Polite

Not only is a less-than-polite letter likely to be ignored, it could even work against you!

Here is how you can format your letter:

At the top of the page, write your full name, your title, and your business address. (You can make this up.)

Write the date.

Write the name and address of your reader, the mayor. Be sure to include the mayor's proper title.

Use the appropriate salutation.

Close your letter with "Sincerely," followed by your signature and your printed name.

Kelly Billings
Chief of Police
100 Main St.
Green Acres, OH 43128

May 14, 2012

Mayor Raymond Zetye
City of Green Acres
500 Maple St.
Green Acres, OH 43128

Dear Mayor Zetye:

First paragraph: Explain your proposal—what it is that you want.

Second paragraph: Explain why it's a good idea to make this decision. Remember to make arguments that will be meaningful *to the mayor*.

Third paragraph: Address any concerns you think the mayor might have and explain why starting a canine unit is still a good idea.

Fourth paragraph: Conclude with a call to action. Tell the mayor (politely) what to do and when to do it. Then thank the mayor for considering your request.

Sincerely,
Kelly Billings
Kelly Billings

Now it's time to write your letter. When you're finished, be sure to edit it carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.