



500 Letters for Difficult Situations



Easy-to-Use Templates for Challenging
Communications

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To my father, who wrote out a long analysis and plan before he asked my mother to marry him.

—Corey Sandler

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

All letters should be difficult to write. That's because you should take your time to lay out your thoughts, wishes, or demands in a careful, considered way.

Think of all the times you have blurted out something (or wished you had said something other than what you did). Wouldn't it have been great to say, "Wait a minute. Let me think about what it is I want and how it would be best for me to respond."

The purpose of this book, the third in a series of collections of letters we have published, is to help you think about difficult communication. There's probably not a letter in this book that exactly matches the situation you face, but as you read through this collection there are many phrases and sentences and strategies you can use.

For our purposes, we're not going to be purists about matters of style. You can choose the form of salutation and thanks you think best. Instead we choose to concentrate on showing you ways to express your thoughts and wants in the clearest and most direct way.

The best way to write a letter is imagine you are speaking directly to the recipient. You have the advantage of being able to think carefully about what you want to say, but in the end the letter should sound very much like the words you would say across a desk or the kitchen table.

Unlike most any other book you might buy, we happily encourage you to make use of our words. Pick up phrases, whole sentences, and long paragraphs and adapt them to your needs.

And although this book uses the word "letters" in its title, that is by no means the only use you can make of the five hundred examples you'll find. Use our examples to construct your own letter, e-mail, or text message. Or read them carefully so that you think about what you plan to say face to face or over the phone.

Here's what you can do:

- Need to write a letter to a friend or a family member on a touchy subject? We've got plenty of examples.
- Got something you need to get off your chest and aimed at a government official, a politician, or someone in the school system? Read on.
- Are you running a small business or employed by one? We've got basic letters about looking for a job, handling your work assignments, hiring, firing, instituting a layoff or a cutback, and most of the other essential details of the workplace.
- Getting the runaround from a store or a contractor or someone else with whom you do business? We'll help you stand up for your rights.
- Does your civic organization need help raising funds, spending money, or fixing all that is wrong in town? We've got some ideas.

Go forth and write difficult letters (and other forms of communication). We hope this book will make the task a bit easier.

—*Corey Sandler and Janice Keefe*

Part 1. Person to Person

Chapter 1. Sympathy and Condolences

Expression of sympathy to friend

Dear Anne,

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of your mother.

I spent many hours with her as a volunteer at the elementary school and the food bank. She was a warm and caring woman, and we are all diminished without her.

I know this is a difficult time for you and your family, but I want you to know that you are in our thoughts.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

Your mother was an exceptional woman and we will all miss her.

Fondly,

Karen Jenkins

Expression of sympathy for death of child

Dear Natalie,

I can hardly imagine the depth of your loss.

Losing a child is not something any of us can prepare for.

Frank and I and all of your friends are thankful for the brief time we had with Patty. She was an extraordinary young person who carried a little ray of sunshine with her everywhere she went. We will never forget her.

I wanted you to know you and your family are in our thoughts. Please let me know if there is anything we can do to assist you in these difficult times.

Love,

Joan Holly

Thanks for expression of sympathy

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your kind words about Susan. I know the two of you were really close and had a great friendship.

It helps to know that her memory will be kept alive through the special people who knew and loved her.

I promise to keep in touch after I take a few weeks off to clear my head.

Fondly,

Jack

Making contribution in memory of friend

Dear Susan,

I want to extend my most heartfelt sympathies to you and your family.

The entire community of Rolling Meadow will mourn Don. He was a most generous and giving man, donating his time and support to so many of our important organizations.

Knowing of his special affection for the Junior Little League of Rolling Meadow, I have a set up a memorial fund in his name and made the first contribution; I will be encouraging others to add to the endowment, which will be used to pay for equipment for youngsters in need.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I can do for you. I hope when the time is right for you, you will call me and we can get together.

Sincerely,

Ella

Thanks for support in time of mourning

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your very kind expressions of sympathy after Jim's death.

It is so very difficult to lose a loved one, but when it happens so suddenly and unexpectedly the loss is almost too much to bear. I do know that I could not have gotten through these past few weeks without the help and support of all of my wonderful friends.

I am in the healing stage of grief, but you have all given me the confidence I need to continue living my life the way Jim would have wanted.

Sincerely,

Gina

Sympathy for death of pet

Dear Ray,

I just learned of the death of your beloved Irish setter, Wilson.

I am so sorry for your loss. Wilson was an extraordinary companion. He was highly intelligent and very protective of you and your family, and his love was unconditional.

It was always a pleasure to meet you when you were out for a walk with him. I join you in missing him.

Sincerely,

Marsha

Support for ill former friend

Dear Monica,

I'm sorry we haven't seen each other in such a long time, and even sorrier to hear from a mutual friend that you are battling some health issues.

Please know that my thoughts and prayers will always be with you. If there is anything I can do to help or if it would be a comfort for you to talk—about anything—please call me.

Fondly,
Louise

Best wishes on return from hospitalization

Dear Lori,

I just heard the great news that you're finally out of the hospital.

We're so happy you are home and on the mend.

We hope you will be ready soon for the company of some of your friends. Please let me know when you'd like us to come over, and I hope you will allow us to bring a meal or some snacks or a movie; just let us know.

Love,
Joy

Saying goodbye to neighbor who is moving

Stacy and Martin Goodwin
Rolling Meadow

Dear Stacy and Martin,

As you prepare to complete the sale of your home and begin the next phase of your life in the south of France, I wanted to wish you the very best.

As far as Anne and I are concerned, we could not have had better neighbors for the past twenty years. We've never had reason to complain, and we've very much enjoyed having you as friends.

We wish you the best of luck in the sunshine. We'll think of you all the time, but especially when we are shoveling out the driveway after another snowstorm.

Please keep in touch.

Sincerely,
Jim

Announcing death of executive

To the staff of Rolling Meadow Building Supply,

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of our longtime human resources director, Jim Pierce.

For more than sixteen years we have been so very fortunate to have someone as capable and knowledgeable as Jim working on behalf of our family of employees. His door was always open to any staffer who had a question or a problem, and he always seemed to come up with the right decision.

He leaves a devoted wife, Nora, and four children, Peter, Sam, Allison, and Jean.

We express our deepest sympathies to his family and offer our full support at this difficult time.

Roger Gibson
President
Rolling Meadow Building Supply

Notice of death of employee

To All Employees,
From Human Resources Department

We are deeply saddened to report that Jim Hapner, our senior night watchman and one of our longest-serving employees, passed away at Rolling Meadow Memorial Hospital early this morning.

Jim, known to all of us as “Chief,” was stricken while on duty. Emergency aid was performed at the company, and he was quickly removed to the hospital where he died soon after arrival.

He is survived by his wife Barbara and his two sons, James Jr., and Emilio.

Chief began work at Rolling Meadow Lumber Company as a salesman in 1989, moving to the security department five years later. He was a model employee and a good friend to most of us, and he will be greatly missed.

We will pass along details about funeral arrangements as soon as they are available. We will also inform you of plans for a special company observance in his honor.

Condolences to spouse of employee

Dear Nora,

On behalf of all of us at Rolling Meadow Building Supply, I want to express our deep sadness at Jim’s passing.

Jim was such an important part of our company; it is hard to imagine the coming years without him.

On a personal note, I was privileged to call him a friend. I will never forget how generous and helpful he was to me and my family when we came to Rolling Meadow

three years ago. He was always willing to extend a helping hand to all who needed his help. He will be greatly missed.

If there is anything we can do to be of assistance to you and your family at this time, please do not hesitate to ask. It would be our privilege to help.

Sincerely,
Roger Gibson, President
Rolling Meadow Building Supply

Sympathy to company on death of executive

Charles Fuller, President
Rolling Meadow Bank

Dear Charlie,

I was shocked to hear about the tragic death of your executive vice president, Ron Wheeler.

Please accept my personal condolences and those of all of us at Rolling Meadow Cable Company. We dealt with Ron on a number of issues, and I always came away impressed by his knowledge and willingness to help solve any problem that came his way; he will not be easily replaced.

Please keep me informed of any tribute or memorials you will hold. I would like to attend as a friend and to pay my respects to his family.

Sincerely,
Alan Tierney, President
Rolling Meadow Cable Company

Chapter 2. Health Issues

Offering support in time of illness

Dear Helen,

I was so sorry to hear that Bill's condition has taken a turn for the worse; I think about the both of you all the time.

From the start I have been so impressed with how the two of you have handled this very difficult diagnosis. You both have been an inspiration to all of us on how to handle a crisis with dignity and respect.

I am sure the emotional and physical demands can be overwhelming. I know you have been so very involved in taking care of Bill, but I hope you are able to keep yourself in good health and spirits.

Please let me help. I am available as a driver, cook, listener, or just about anything else you might need. Please call me.

Sincerely,
Abigail

Thanks for support in time of illness

Dear Laura,

I feel as if I have turned the corner and am starting to feel like my old self again. It has been quite a strain to be ill for so long, but I am hopeful now that I can begin to return to my life and friends.

I cannot tell you how frightening it was when I received the initial diagnosis. But you and other friends were so quick to come to my side.

I could not have come this far without the tremendous support I received from wonderful people like you. I am truly blessed to have friends like you.

Sincerely,
Donna

Asking friend for advice on medical issue

Dear Bill,

I hope you don't mind, but I would appreciate some personal advice.

Beth has just been diagnosed with the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. I have heard you speak with such compassion about your wife Lorraine's struggle with the condition.

We have already joined a support group suggested by our doctor, and we hope to benefit from that.

I am hoping I could meet with you sometime in the coming weeks to learn more

about how Beth and I can cope with this difficult news. You are already a role model for me.

Sincerely,
Dave Fairchild

Seeking special wheelchair accommodation

Dear Manager,

For the past twenty years our family has included The Nutcracker at the Rolling Meadow Civic Center as an important part of our holiday tradition.

Three weeks ago my wife had a bad fall and broke both of her legs; she will be in a wheelchair for the next few months.

I bought our tickets for the December 20 production in July and got our usual seats in the second row, right-side balcony. That area is not wheelchair-accessible.

When I called the ticket office to attempt to change them to another location I was informed that no refunds or changes were permitted.

We are willing to visit the theater on another night and to pay any additional charge if necessary.

I would appreciate your assistance in allowing us to continue with our holiday tradition in these changed circumstances. I have to believe there is some way the theater can work with someone with a medical need, and I also hope you can assist your ticket office in coming up with a more flexible policy for the next person faced with this sort of unexpected situation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.
John Evans

Inviting special-needs family to join a group

Dear Mrs. Ortiz,

I would like to welcome you and your family to Rolling Meadow. It is a wonderful place to live, and we all try to look after each other as best we can.

The school nurse contacted me to say that you had given her permission to contact some area organizations on your behalf.

I would like to invite you and your son Tim to become part of our informal support group.

We are a group of five mothers and six preschool children. All of our children have been diagnosed with various levels of developmental difficulty.

We meet once a week for one hour. The children are able to socialize and play in a structured and supervised situation; as parents we get to share our experiences and strategies in helping our youngsters succeed in school and in life.

I hope you will call me to discuss the group. We welcome your participation.

Regards,
Sue Miller

Asking assignment of different doctor

Donna Sawyer, medical director
Rolling Meadow Assisted Living Home
Rolling Meadow

Dear Donna,

I am writing to request you arrange for a change of doctors for my mother, Louise Morneau.

In speaking with her, she tells us she is very uncomfortable with Dr. Beckett, the new general practitioner who has taken over Dr. Mauer's practice. As you know, my mother does not often complain about anything, and therefore we believe there is a problem we need to deal with.

We have spoken with acquaintances and done some research on doctors in the area, and I feel she would be more comfortable with a female physician like the one she had been seeing for many years before moving to the assisted-living home.

We have spoken with Dr. Mary Salcetti and she has agreed to take my mother as a new patient. I am enclosing full details about Dr. Salcetti, including some forms her office would like filled out as well as a request to Dr. Beckett for the transfer of records.

Please make an appointment for my mother for a checkup. Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,
Brenda Coffin

Asking medical records be transferred

Jeffrey Mitchell, MD
Rolling Meadow Pediatric Services

Dear Dr. Mitchell,

Please forward all medical records and charts relating to my daughter, Suzanne Karl, to her new pediatrician, Dr. David Meehan, MD.

Dr. Meehan's address is 68 Evergreen Way, Rolling Meadow Hospital, Rolling Meadow.

Thank you.

Sarah Karl

Asking medical records be transferred for cause

Jeffrey Mitchell, MD
Rolling Meadow Pediatric Services

Dear Dr. Mitchell,

Although we have appreciated your attention to our children, in recent months it has become apparent to us that you have taken on more patients than can be reasonably handled. On our last three visits we have had to wait about an hour before being seen, and the office visits themselves were very rushed.

We have decided to have Suzanne seen by a new doctor here in town; based on our conversations with him and his office manager we believe he intends to provide a higher level of service to his patients.

Please forward all medical records and charts relating to my daughter, Suzanne Karl, to her new pediatrician, Dr. David Meehan, MD.

Dr. Meehan's address is 68 Evergreen Parkway, Rolling Meadow Hospital, Rolling Meadow.

Thank you,
Sarah Karl

Notification of medical power of attorney or proxy

Timothy Logan, MD
Rolling Meadow

In regards to Mary O'Neil

Dear Dr. Logan,

Enclosed please find certified copies of a durable power of attorney and a medical proxy prepared by our lawyer to allow us to assist in the care of my mother, Mary O'Neil. We have also enclosed a notarized copy of a letter, signed by mother, granting permission for you to discuss her medical condition and treatment with me.

We very much appreciate the care my mother has received from you for more than a decade. In her older years, we want to be able to assist her and you in handling medical issues as they arise.

If you have any questions about these forms, please contact me or our attorney; I have enclosed a copy of his business card.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Marie Connor

Offering to help neighbor recovering from hospitalization

Aaron Philips

Rolling Meadow

Dear Aaron,

I was glad to hear from your wife that you are home from the hospital and recovering from your accident. Please accept my best wishes for a speedy recovery.

One of the sure signs of summer was to go by your house and see you mowing your lawn or tending to your garden. I am sure it is a concern for you that you will not be able to care for your property that well for a while.

Your wife asked me about the lawn service we use. I have two young men who cut my grass and do some maintenance on my garden once a week.

As far as I am concerned they are very dependable and do a good job; even better, their rates are quite reasonable. If you would like, I can ask them to stop by to speak to you.

They are scheduled to be at my house this Friday at 10 a.m.

And also, if it would help in any way, please let me know if there are any errands I can do for you. I would be happy to pick up groceries or other items when we go out on our own trips.

Sincerely,
Janet Mosley

Inquiring about health of acquaintance

Paul Winkler
Rolling Meadow

Dear Paul,

We really miss you around the neighborhood and at the senior center.

Please forgive me for intruding, but I was wondering if everything was okay with you. If there is anything I can do—come and visit, run some errands, or just about anything else—please don't hesitate to call and ask.

Sincerely,
Joe Vance

Helping friend dealing with ill spouse

Dear Friends,

I've just learned that Stan's cancer has progressed to the point that he is now in a hospice. They don't know how long he has, but he is still alert and seeing visitors—I'm headed there later this week.

I'm hoping that all of us can also do what we can for Betty. She doesn't drive and has been taking buses or taxis every day. I'd like to organize a rotating car pool to bring her back and forth to the hospice; there are enough of us who care for both of

them to arrange for daily transportation and visits to Stan.

Please let me know if you're able to help and the best days for you. I'll put together a schedule.

Shirley

To friends about acquaintance in grave health

Dear Gene and Betsy,

I wanted to give you an update on my uncle Scott's condition.

As you know, a few months ago he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He has been undergoing treatment and has fought hard, but in the last week his condition took a turn for the worse.

He is now in the Hospice Unit at Mercy Hospital; he has come to peace with his prospects. As close friends of Scott, we thought you would like to know and might appreciate the chance to come and see him one last time.

Mornings seem to be the best for him.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Craig

About deteriorating health of acquaintance

Dear Nancy,

I ran into June and her husband at church last Sunday.

As you are probably aware, she has been under a doctor's care for some time. Until I saw her, though, I did not know how serious her condition has become.

Her husband Will later gave me a call and confirmed that she is suffering from a very serious disease, fighting for her life.

I think it would be a good idea for all of her friends to come together and offer our support to June and Will.

She still has energy to go out occasionally and has always enjoyed being with us. I don't think we should wait too long. I'd welcome your suggestions.

Sincerely,
Marge

Changing address to nursing home

Rajiv Gupta, secretary
Rolling Meadow Historical Association
Rolling Meadow

Dear Rajiv,

My mother, Rose Chambers, has been an active member of your association for

many years.

She recently suffered a stroke and is now living at the Rolling Meadow Nursing Home.

Please continue to send her your monthly newsletter at that address as the Historical Association is very important to her.

Because her mobility has been affected, she will not be going to the museum any time soon. If there is a way to see that she does not receive solicitations about benefits or parties she cannot attend it would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Bruce Chambers

Acknowledging difficulties in personal life

Dear Jack,

We think of Susan often and miss her very much. We treasure the time we had with her, and those beautiful New England, in-the-fall memories are very special.

We fully understand how you might feel uncomfortable traveling with us on your own right now.

Can we make a different suggestion? We would love for you to come visit us at our home in Georgia and spend a few days enjoying the beach; we know we'd enjoy seeing you.

I hope you'll accept. We don't want to miss the chance to see you this fall.

Love,
Gloria

Declining invitation because of mourning

Dear Gloria and Phil,

I'm sorry to say that I have decided to decline your invitation to head up to New England to view the fall colors this year. I really appreciate you thinking of me, but this year I just don't feel up to going.

Since Susan passed away in the spring, I have been trying to get my routine back to normalcy, but I'm not quite there yet.

For many years, this trip was one of our favorite activities. Not only was it a magical time of year, but being in the company of some of our dearest friends created some very special memories.

I hope you understand, and I hope you will invite me again next year. I hope by then I'll be ready.

Fondly,
Jack