

10 TIPS FOR WRITING GREAT LETTERS



Letters are written for a variety of reasons, including requesting information or action, providing information, describing an event, or expressing appreciation. Follow these tips to writing effective letters to advocate for your child with special needs.

- 1. Identify the goal of the letter.** Write it on the top of the page and refer back to it to ensure your letter is meeting your goal.
- 2. Write a first draft.** Put it aside overnight, and take a look at it the next day.
- 3. Remove emotion from the letter.** Do not threaten to call a lawyer or name-call. Present the facts only.
- 4. Discuss your issue in chronological order.** Start from the beginning and use dates. If necessary, use bullet points to identify each event in a process.
- 5. Include all facts.** If you mentioned speaking with someone by phone or e-mail, be sure to include their full name, title, and date.
- 6. Keep it short and sweet.** The letter should be less than one page in length and revolve around one (or maybe two) issues. Do not repeat yourself.
- 7. Include all identifying information.** Make sure your letter has your contact information and your child's date of birth, ID number, school and home address.
- 8. Keep a copy.** Keep a copy of the letter. If you need to be sure that the recipient has received a copy, send it by certified mail. Letters will end up in your child's file and might be important pieces of evidence later on.
- 9. Proofread carefully.** Ask someone to look over the letter or e-mail for spelling or grammar mistakes. A professionally written letter will be taken more seriously than one with sloppy errors.
- 10. Ask for feedback.** Call the INCLUDEnyc Help Line at (212) 677-4660 and ask an advocate to offer feedback on your letter or e-mail.