

## HOW-TO GUIDE

# Host a letter writing event with Vote Forward!

Thank you for hosting a letter writing event! Writing letters to voters is a proven effective tactic to increase voter turnout. Bringing people in your community together to write letters as a group is a great way to multiply your impact, and it's also just fun!

Since Vote Forward's founding, volunteers have been getting together in homes, coffee shops, and community centers, and online, to write letters together. These folks have proven just how effective (and motivating!) writing together can be.

This guide contains everything you need to host your own letter writing event, and you can always email our team at [host@votefwd.org](mailto:host@votefwd.org) for support. At the end of this guide you'll find all our links to resources for hosts, and for your event attendees.

If you're involved with an organization hoping to engage your members in letter writing, please check out our partnership options at [votefwd.org/partners/](https://votefwd.org/partners/)

## Before your letter writing event

We recommend getting started with planning and preparation at least seven days before your event to be as successful as possible.

### Choose when and where you'll host your event

- **In-person:** You can host a letter writing event almost anywhere, as long as there is enough space for your volunteers and a flat surface to write on. Locations to consider include public places like libraries or coffee shops, outdoor locations like parks, or in your home. If you choose to host in person, consider bringing printed letters and other supplies (such as envelopes, stamps, or pens) for your attendees. Even if you cannot provide all these supplies for everyone, it's a good idea to have some on hand, or ask attendees to pool resources or bring supplies.
  - **Note:** Vote Forward letters do include personal name and address information about voters. If you are hosting your event in a public place, please be sure not to leave letters lying unattended, and double-check that you have collected all of your group's letters before leaving.

- **Virtual:** If you host virtually, set up your event and create a link on a virtual platform such as Zoom. If you choose to host virtually, you should encourage your volunteers to sign up for their own Vote Forward account, and adopt and print their letters in advance of the event.
  - **Note:** Because real human beings approve every writer who signs up through Vote Forward, it can take up to 48 hours for volunteers to be approved. Be sure to contact your volunteers **at least two days before your event** to remind them to create their accounts and double check that they know how to download and print their letters.

## Set up your event on Mobilize, our online events platform

Once you have confirmed a date and time for your event, post your event on Mobilize so you can promote your event, track RSVPs, and easily communicate with attendees.

- This Mobilize event template will help you create and post the link: [mobilize.us/votefwd/c/letter-writing-event/event/create](https://mobilize.us/votefwd/c/letter-writing-event/event/create)
  - This step is optional, but recommended since Mobilize will send automatic reminders to those who RSVP, and sends them instructions on how to create their own Vote Forward accounts.
- If you want to keep your event private only to guests you invite directly, you can mark your event private, so only those with the link can see the information, and others in your area won't be able to find the event.

## Recruit volunteers

- Now you should ask people to sign up for your event! Invite your friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, local group members, and anyone you know who would be interested in increasing voter turnout and strengthening our democracy in a fun and easy way. You can invite them in person, or send emails, texts, or whatever communication method works best for you. Another way to recruit volunteers is to share your invitation on social media [using these sample graphics](#), or posting or handing out flyers in high-traffic areas in your community like your local coffee shop, grocery store, or park.
- A great way to engage your attendees even more is to ask them to help plan the event. It can make hosting the event easier for you, and people are more likely to follow through when they are part of the planning process! You could ask them to help with volunteer recruitment or training, promotional materials for email and social media, or, for in-person parties, help purchasing snacks or letter writing materials to share with attendees.

## Print letter templates and gather supplies

Before your event, you need to print your letter templates and gather the supplies. The best process for this depends on if you are hosting virtually or in-person.

- **For in-person parties**, we suggest that you download and print letter templates for as many attendees as you feel able to support. If you cannot provide printed letters for all of your attendees, make sure that they sign up for a Vote Forward account at least two days before your event, and that they download their letters in

advance. Multiply the number of people you expect to attend your event by 20 to determine the total number of voters you should adopt through your Vote Forward account, then download and print your letters.

- Each attendee will also need 20 business-sized envelopes, 20 stamps, and pens. You can prepare these materials for your event or ask your attendees to bring them.
- **For virtual parties**, each attendee will need to download and print their own letter templates. You should include the sign-up link and these instructions in your Mobilize event description. Remember, it can take up to 48 hours for volunteers to be approved on Vote Forward, so at least two days before, please remind attendees to create their accounts and double check that they know how to download and print their letters.

## Confirm volunteers

- The day before, or on the day of your event, you should remind everyone to attend and how to join your event! Mobilize sends automatic reminders by email and text, but a personalized check-in from you can increase the number of people who follow through and write letters with you.

## During your letter writing event

Make a copy of [this sample slide presentation](#) to edit and use during your event. If your location is outside or in a public place, you could bring your laptop or tablet to share the slides, and use them as a guide when explaining how and why to write letters.

## Welcome your volunteers

- Greet each person as they arrive and welcome them. Take note of who joins your event so that you can thank and follow up with them later.
- Do your best to be inclusive and connect with guests, whether you are virtual or in-person. At in-person parties, introduce people to each other and ask questions to get to know your attendees. At virtual parties, give everyone the chance to briefly introduce themselves out loud or in the chat.

## Train volunteers to write letters

- Next, demonstrate the letter writing process! You can use [this sample slide presentation](#) and letter writing instructions to help prepare your training and walk your attendees through the process.

## Help your volunteers avoid some common errors

- Each letter is personalized for each voter—they should look at the name and address at the bottom of the letter to make sure they are writing to the correct voter. We recommend waiting to seal the envelopes until the end and checking that they are correct.

- **Tip:** Each packet of 20 letters will come with a cover page that lists all 20 names and addresses. We recommend not giving this cover page to your volunteers. Ensuring they only use the info at the bottom of each individual letter to address the respective envelope will cut down on mistakes.
- Volunteers don't need to use their own return address—they can write their first name, last initial on the first line, and "Vote Forward" on the second line.
- Personal messages must be nonpartisan—volunteers should not mention specific parties or candidates. Positive, heartfelt messages work best. Give volunteers time to write their messages on scratch paper or share their messages with the group.

## Write letters together

Now, it's time to write letters together! Here are some ideas to get creative and make your letter writing event even more fun:

- Volunteers can chat and enjoy each other's company while writing letters. Use breakout rooms during virtual parties for small group discussions.
- Host a watch party for a movie, TV show, documentary, or events like political debates.
- Listen to music during your event.
- Choose a theme for your event, such as a holiday, and use costumes and decorations for your theme.
- Host a potluck so attendees can enjoy food and drinks at the event (but be careful to avoid staining your letters, of course!)
- Challenge your attendees to a trivia competition.
- Pick a fun venue like a playground if your volunteers have young children, or a beer garden for a 21+ event.
- Be available for questions in case your volunteers need help, and remind them to check that their letters are addressed to the correct voter before sealing and stamping their envelopes.

## Thank volunteers for coming

- At the end of your event, take the time to do a short closing.
  - Give clear instructions for what happens next with the letters.
  - If you downloaded and printed the letter templates, collect the finished letters and verify that all of the letters are accounted for. You'll store all of these until you receive a notification that it's time to mail your letters.
  - If your volunteers downloaded and printed their own letter templates, remind them to mark their letters as "Prepared" on Vote Forward, store their letters in a safe place, and mark their calendars for the beginning of the mailing window.
  - Since you may be storing these letters for weeks or months before mailing them, we recommend storing them in labeled boxes, folders, or cabinets with the mail date or window written on the label.
- Thank your volunteers for joining your event and remind them how their letters will make a real impact. Invite everyone to attend your next letter writing event and ask them to sign up before they leave!

# After your letter writing event

## Mark your letters prepared

- After your letters are completed, go back to your Vote Forward dashboard and mark them as "Prepared."
- Add the mail window to your calendar or set a reminder, and store your letters in a safe and memorable place until the mail date.
  - If your volunteers downloaded and printed their own letter templates, remind them to do the same.

## Update attendance and send a thank-you email

- Go back to your Mobilize dashboard to update your attendance.
- Then, send an email to everyone who joined your event to thank them again for coming, remind them what to do with their letters if they downloaded and printed their own, and invite them to your next letter writing event.
  - You can also email everyone who didn't attend to say you missed seeing them at your event and invite them to your next one.

## Celebrate your impact on social media

- Show everyone how fun letter writing parties can be! Share photos or anecdotes from your event on social media and tag or mention @votefwd so that we can amplify your posts.
  - **Note:** Be sure to obscure any voter information—like addresses on envelopes—before you share!

## Send a reminder before the mail date

- Before the mail date, remind all of your volunteers who downloaded and printed their own letter templates to get ready to put their letters in the mail or bring them to the post office on the correct day!
- This is another great opportunity to thank them for volunteering and share photos to celebrate your impact. After your letters are in the mail, you or your volunteers should mark your letters as 'Sent' on your Vote Forward dashboard.

**And that's it!** You successfully hosted your letter writing event. Thank you for being part of increasing voter turnout and strengthening democracy with us—we couldn't do this without dedicated leaders like you!

# Resources for hosts

[Post your letter writing event on Mobilize](#)

[Sample Slide Presentation](#) *(make a copy to customize)*

[Promotional Graphics](#)

[host@votefwd.org](mailto:host@votefwd.org) *(email our team with any questions or concerns—we're happy to help!)*

# Resources for event attendees

Share these how-to guides with your guests

[Letter writing instructions](#) and [sign-up page](#) *(for virtual parties, or anytime you're asking volunteers to download and print their own letters)*

[Building your personal story](#) *(Vote Forward blog)*

## EVENT CHECKLIST

# Host a letter writing event with Vote Forward!

### Before your event

- Decide if your event is going to be in person or virtual
  - If in person, choose your location.
  - If virtual, encourage your volunteers to sign up for their Vote Forward accounts, adopt voters, and print letters at least 2 days before the event.
- Set up your event on Mobilize
  - Create your event with this template
- Recruit volunteers
  - You can use these sample graphics
- For in-person events, print letter templates and gather supplies
  - 20 letters, 20 envelopes, and 20 stamps per person
  - Pens
- Confirm volunteers the day before

### During your event

- Welcome your volunteers
- Train your volunteers on how to write letters
  - Use the instructions in these sample slides
- Write letters together and have fun
- Give instructions for how volunteers should return letters to you (if you are hosting in-person) or store them until the mail window (if you are hosting virtually)
- Thank volunteers for coming

### After your event

- Store your letters until the mail window
- Mark your letters as prepared on Vote Forward's dashboard
- Send a follow up email to your volunteers
- Celebrate your impact on social media
  - Don't forget to tag @votefwd !
- Send a reminder before mail window opens
- Send your letters
- Mark your letters as sent on Vote Forward's dashboard



Get started today at [votefwd.org](https://votefwd.org)

## About Vote Forward

We enable grassroots volunteers to play a leading role in testing and scaling innovative, high-impact tactics that encourage fellow Americans to vote.

The majority of our voter contact campaigns are nonpartisan, supporting our core 501c(3) and 501c(4) social-welfare mission, which focuses on mobilizing potential voters in historically marginalized communities. We also support 501(c)(4) partisan campaigns to encourage likely-Democratic voters to turn out in strategic states and districts.

Since launching in 2017, Vote Forward has been committed to scale, impact, and partnership. We've written over 40 million letters to voters with the help of over 285,000 volunteers and numerous nonprofit, political, and corporate partners ranging from Patagonia to Daily Kos to the Milwaukee Bucks and more. Now we're hard at work developing new and innovative tactics for the upcoming election cycle.

**285,000+**

Volunteers powering this work

**40M+**

Handwritten letters sent to voters

**25+**

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) conducted & publicly shared

## Measuring our impact

Twenty out of 25 of our experiments have shown a positive (non-null) effect on voter turnout, providing evidence that letter writing has made a material difference in a range of elections over the past eight years. Some highlights demonstrating the power of letter writing include:

- Vote Forward's first letter-writing experiment—in a 2017 special election for the U.S. Senate in Alabama—boosted voter turnout by 3.4 percentage points, twice the margin of victory.
- In 2020, Vote Forward's first presidential-year experiment found that handwritten letters increased voter turnout by 0.5 to 0.8 percentage points. Over 200,000 volunteers sent more than 17.6 million letters—resulting in an estimated 126,000 additional votes in key states.
- We've conducted voter turnout experiments over three Virginia statewide election cycles (2019, 2021, and 2023) and measured positive results in each one.

## Our Partners

Supermajority



INDIVISIBLE



DAILY KOS



patagonia



COLLEGE DEMOCRATS OF AMERICA

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC

## How it works: Writing letters to voters with Vote Forward

Writing personalized, handwritten letters to voters is a proven and effective way to help increase voter turnout and strengthen our democracy. Plus, as we hear from our volunteers all the time, letter writing is a great way to turn anxiety into action!

### What you'll need:



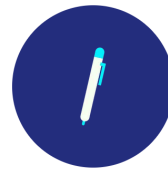
Printer & paper



Stamps



Envelopes



A pen

### Remember:

- All letters must be **non-partisan**; do not mention any political party or candidate.
- Your **personal, heartfelt message** about voting is the key component of the letter.

1

**Create your account with Vote Forward.** Sign up for a Vote Forward account by answering a few quick questions to help us identify pro-democracy volunteers. A real person will review and approve your account within 2 days.

2

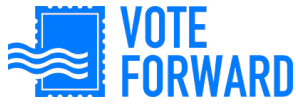
**Adopt voters and download letters.** Adopt voters in sets of 5 or 20 from the campaign of your choice. Download and print your letters, then you're ready to write!

3

**Prepare your letters.** Each letter template is specific to a particular voter, so you'll find a name and address printed at the bottom of every page. Begin by writing the voter's first name after the printed 'Dear' at the top of the page. Then add your personal note in the body of the letter. Finally, address your envelope, stuff, stamp, and repeat!

4

**Mail your letters.** The mail dates for each campaign are listed near the top of your Vote Forward Dashboard and on each letter bundle. It's a good idea to mark the mail date(s) on your calendar so you don't forget, but we'll send you a reminder via email, too.



## Letter Event Invitation Email Template

**Note: This letter template is an example of what an invitation to a letter writing party could look like, but please feel free to make changes and updates based on your own needs and plans for the gathering.**

**Option 1: Host plans to provide some/all materials for the party by printing letter templates:**

Hello Friends!

I am hosting a letter writing event at **{date, time, location}** and you're invited!

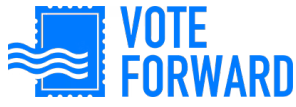
I write letters with Vote Forward because **{explanation from host for letter writing in general and/or specific campaign rationale}**. I want to make it easy for other people to get involved too.

Letter writing is fun and easy. Everyone will develop their own personal answer to the prompt: "I vote because" that inspires a you-can-make-a-difference mentality. Vote Forward's research from 2021 suggests that personal stories are the most effective at encouraging other citizens to show up to the polls. There is a personal story training that you can review in advance of the party if you want to get a head start on your message. We will be talking about messages at the party as well, so if you don't want to get started early, no pressure.

What to expect: **{Host: Edit below section as necessary to include information about food, drinks, stamps, etc.}**

We will spend some time talking through the general letter writing and message guidelines to make sure everyone has an idea of what they'll say. I will provide letter templates, pens and highlighters, envelopes, and stamps, but if you have any supplies you would like to contribute, they are always welcome. Then we'll get started on our letters. On average, it takes about an hour for folks to complete 20 letters, but if we get decorative and fun on them, they can take longer.

I'm excited to get together in person to make a positive difference in our world. Let me know if you have any questions and I hope to see you soon.



**Option 2: Host DOES NOT plan to provide materials for letter writers and is asking them to sign up and print off their own letter templates:**

Hello Friends!

I am hosting a letter writing event at **{date, time, location}** and you're invited!

I write letters with Vote Forward because **{explanation from host for letter writing in general and/or specific campaign rationale}**. I want to make it easy for other people to get involved too.

Letter writing is fun and easy. Everyone will develop their own personal answer to the prompt: "I vote because" that inspires a you-can-make-a-difference mentality. Vote Forward's research from 2021 suggests that personal stories are the most effective at encouraging other citizens to show up to the polls. There is a personal story training that you can review in advance of the party if you want to get a head start on your message. We will be talking about messages at the party as well, so if you don't want to get started early, no pressure.

What to expect: **{Host: Edit below section as necessary to include information about food, drinks, etc.}**

**\*IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE ATTENDING\*** If you plan to come to the party, you will need to make an account at [votefwd.org](http://votefwd.org) so that you can download, print, and bring your own letters. The accounts are reviewed by a person, so it can take 1-2 days for approval to come through.

Once your account is approved, you can choose a campaign to write to, adopt, then download and print your letter templates. If printing is an issue, Vote Forward has some suggestions, or you can message me and we can figure something out. Please remember to bring letters, envelopes, and stamps with you to the party.

At the party, we will spend some time talking through the letter writing and message guidelines to make sure everyone has an idea of what they'll say. Then we'll get started on our letters. On average, it takes about an hour for folks to complete 20 letters, but if we get decorative and fun on them, they can take longer.

I'm excited to get together in person to make a positive difference in our world. Let me know if you have any questions and I hope to see you soon.