

## Condolence Letters: Sending Words Of Encouragement To A Loved One

Condolence letters are considered some of the most difficult letters to write and send because of their very sensitive nature. Even so, when someone close to you is dealing with the loss of a loved one, the grief and bereavement, writing and sending a condolence letter is probably one of the most considerate, kind, and thoughtful things you can do.

A condolence letter, if written properly, can show that you care about your friend and what they're going through and that you are sympathetic to their loss. Although there are many different ways to remember a loved one, such as a funeral, memorial service, online memorials, and online obituaries, writing and sending condolence letters can also be your way of not only expressing sympathy but also in remembering a loved one and sharing those memories with your grieving friend or relative.

The problem is that many people have a hard time finding the right words to express themselves in writing during such a sensitive time. Before you put pen to paper or start thinking of what you are possibly going to write, keep in mind that your letter, in addition to being carefully and well-written, should aim to achieve three main purposes. The first is to express sympathy and comfort to your friend or relative experiencing the loss of a loved one. The second is to honor and pay tribute to the deceased and the third is to let the bereaved person know that you are available should they need help. If you are able to keep these three things in mind, and put them on paper, your condolence letter will in fact be honest and heartfelt.

Try to be personal and heartfelt in your condolence letter, without being too sentimental and gushing. You can start by acknowledging what happened—the person's death, how you found out about it, how it made you feel, etc. Do not go into detail about how or why the person died—this is completely unnecessary and unhelpful. Move on to express sympathy and comfort to your friend or relative in bereavement. If you don't know the name of person who died (for example, it could be your best friend's grandmother), find out. This will make your condolence letter more personal and meaningful. If you're uncomfortable asking, find out at the funeral or memorial service, or search online - their obituary may be online or an online memorial may have been set up.

Next, include positive statements about the relationship between the deceased and your friend or loved one, if appropriate, as well as positive statements about your relationship with the deceased. Don't forget to include something positive about them in general—his or her good qualities, characteristics, personality, hobbies, interests, good memories, etc.

In writing your condolence letter, avoid clichés like “I know how you feel” or “This is for the best” or “This is God's will”—these statements are generally not sincere or heartfelt and don't really serve a purpose.

Also, avoid writing general statements about your willingness to help if needed (this is unfortunately very common in condolence letters). While you likely have a desire to do something for your friend or relative who is grieving for the loss of a loved one, think of something practical that you can specifically do, and then offer your services—but only if you can follow through.

How do you send a condolence letter? First of all, it's usually not appropriate to type and then print one out using your computer. Secondly, avoid e-mailing a condolence letter, save for special or extreme circumstances. The best way to write and send your letter is to handwrite it using stationery. Remembering a loved one and offering support through a condolence letter requires a personal touch.

When mailing your letter, make sure it's mailed within two weeks or so of the person's death in order to properly pay your respects in a timely manner.

Writing a condolence letter is not an easy task. It is a difficult but necessary thing we may all have to do in our life to help aid a loved one in a time of need. Take this as a simple guide to get you on your way as you have to take on the task.

~Ben Anton, 2007

### About the Author

Ben Anton invites you to celebrate the lives of loved ones by visiting our [online memorial service](#) website.

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