

# Dear Mr. President

**Estimated Time:** 40 minutes

## I. Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will:

- identify the parts of a friendly letter.
- write a friendly letter to President Bush.

## II. Materials and Resources

- Photo of the White House
- Chart paper and marker
- Copies of **Parts of a Friendly Letter** graphic organizer
- Partially completed friendly letter template (grades 2-3)
- Copies of blank friendly letter template (grades 4-6)
- Sample letter to President Bush
- Manila envelope addressed to President Bush
- Wall map of the United States
- Computer (s) with Internet access

## III. Introduction

1. Ask students to guess the number of letters that President Bush has received. Record five of the guesses on the board. Tell students that President Bush has actually received over 5 million letters!
2. Explain that the White House has a very famous address and people from all over the world write President Bush to ask him questions, give him ideas, or to tell him how good or bad of a job he is doing.
3. Place a photo of the White House and write the address next to the photo or on the board:  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
N.W. Washington, D.C. 20500
4. Tell students that they will learn how to write a friendly letter to President Bush.

## IV. Procedure

*(The following procedures can be adapted to fit your students' needs. In the lower grades, you may want to model the sample letter, pointing out the five parts of the letter. Read the letter aloud to students and have them join you as you write a class letter. Students can volunteer questions and help write words on chart paper. You can type, or rewrite, the class letter and send it to President Bush. In the upper grades, you may wish to read the sample letter, explain the five parts, and have students write their own letter.)*

1. Display and read the friendly letter example. Tell students that a friendly letter has five parts. Point to each part of the letter.
2. Tell students that you are going to model a class letter to President Bush.
3. Once again, explain that the first part of a friendly letter is the date. Ask students for the date and record it on the top left side of the class letter.
4. Explain that the next part of a friendly letter is the greeting. Tell students that the greeting is the beginning of a friendly letter. Point out that the greeting is always followed by a punctuation mark called a comma. Under the date, write: *Dear President Bush,*

5. Explain that the third part of a friendly letter is the introduction. Tell students that in the introduction, you give information about yourself and tell why you are writing the letter. (For grade 2-6, remind students that each new paragraph should be indented. Demonstrate it as you write the introduction and body on the class letter.) Elicit ideas from students to put in the introduction of the class letter to President Bush. (Sample response: *We are in grade \_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ School. We would like to ask you questions about what it is like to be President.*)
6. Point out the fourth part of the friendly letter—the body. Tell students that the body is the main part of the letter. Explain that the body of their letters will include questions for President Bush.
7. Give students a moment to brainstorm a question they would like to ask President Bush about his job or about the White House. Have students share their questions as you write them on the board. (Sample responses: *What do you like best about your job? What time do you get up in the morning to go to work? What is the most difficult part of your job? What is your favorite memory of living in the White House? Who cooks your meals?*)
8. Select 2 to 3 appropriate responses and record them on the chart. Tell students that they will have the chance to write their own questions in their letters to President Bush later on in the lesson.
9. Describe the last part of the friendly letter—the closing. Explain that the closing is a polite way to end a friendly letter. On the bottom left side of the chart, write: *Sincerely,*  
*Ms. or Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s students from \_\_\_\_\_ School*
10. Read the class letter together to make sure it makes sense. Informally assess students' understanding by having them name the parts of the friendly letter.
11. Emphasize that friendly letters need to be neatly written and have correct spelling so that the person who receives the letter can read it. Read aloud and display the sample letter. Have students evaluate its content and neatness. Ask:
  - *Does the letter have the 5 parts of a friendly letter?*
  - *Does the introduction tell something about the person who wrote it?*
  - *Does it tell why the person is writing the letter?*
  - *Does the body have questions for President Bush?*
  - *Is the handwriting legible? Are the letters formed correctly?*
  - *Does the letter make sense?*
  - *Are the words spelled correctly?*

Share the assessment rubric with students so they know the criteria for an excellent letter. Students can assign a rubric score to the sample letter. Encourage students to ask these questions about their own friendly letters as they work on them.

12. Invite students to write their own friendly letters to President Bush. Distribute the partially completed template for grades 2-3 and the blank friendly letter template for grades 4-6. In kindergarten and grade 1, students can help write a classroom letter.
  - Tell students that the greeting and closing have been filled in for them. Each student will need to write the date, the introduction, the body, and his/her name under the closing. Provide assistance for students as they write. Encourage them to use the class letter as a model. You may also give students the graphic organizer, so that they can organize their thoughts before writing the letter. (grades 2-3)
  - Remind students to indent their paragraphs. Provide assistance if necessary.
13. Gather students together at the conclusion of the lesson. Allow volunteers to share their letters.

14. Pass the manila envelope addressed to President Bush around the circle and allow students to place their letters inside.
15. Point to your city on a wall map of the United States and trace the route to the White House. Ask students to name the states (or cities) between the routes. Inform students that you will share President Bush's responses with them as soon as they arrive in the mail.

## V. Assessment

### Rubric for "Friendly Letter to the President"

Score	Unsatisfactory	Fair	Good	Excellent
<b>Parts of the Friendly Letter (Date, Greeting, Introduction, Body, Closing)</b>	Letter is missing 3 or more parts of a friendly letter	Letter is missing 2 parts of a friendly letter	Letter is missing 1 part of a friendly letter	Letter is complete with all parts of a friendly letter
<b>Content of the Introduction</b>	Introduction is not logically written	Introduction does not include either a sentence telling about yourself or the reason for writing	Introduction includes both a sentence telling about yourself and your reason for writing	Introduction includes extra details about yourself and your reason for writing
<b>Content of the Body</b>	Body does not include questions for President Bush	Body has 1 question for President Bush	Body includes 2 questions for President Bush	Body includes 3 or more questions about President Bush's job or life in the White House
<b>Handwriting</b>	Printing is illegible	Printing is difficult to read in some parts because of messy handwriting or incorrectly formed letters	Printing has some incorrectly formed letters, but it does not interfere with readability	Printing is neat and legible with appropriate letter size, formation, and spacing
<b>Spelling and Punctuation</b>	Letter has repeated spelling and punctuation errors	Letter has 3 to 4 spelling and punctuation errors	Letter has 1 to 2 errors in spelling or punctuation	Letter is error-free

## VI. Extensions

1. Read selected parts of *Kids' Letters to President Bush* by Bill Adler to students during read aloud time. Students might enjoy hearing other children's letters to President Bush.
2. Read and discuss the responses from President Bush when they arrive.
3. Encourage students to visit Project Presidency 2008: Why is the White House Important? Access the Project Presidency web site to learn more about the White House and the President's job. Ask students to write summaries or brief reports for each of the sections.
4. Students can also e-mail the President and others at the White House. Listed below are the e-mail addresses for the President, Vice President, and First Lady.  
[president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)  
[vice.president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:vice.president@whitehouse.gov)  
[first.lady@whitehouse.gov](mailto:first.lady@whitehouse.gov)

## **VII. National Standards**

National Council for the Social Studies

Thematic Strands

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Civic Ideals and Practices

National Council of Teachers of English

Language Arts Standards

- Standard 3 Evaluation Strategies
- Standard 4 Communication Skills
- Standard 5 Communication Strategies
- Standard 6 Applying Knowledge
- Standard 11 Participating in Society
- Standard 12 Applying Language Skills

# Parts of a Friendly Letter Graphic Organizer

**Date**

**Greeting**

**Introduction**

**Body**

**Closing**

## Sample Letter

July 27, 2008 **[DATE]**

Dear President Bush, **[GREETING]**

My name is Tommy. I am in first grade at Jefferson School. I would like to ask you a few questions.

### **[INTRODUCTION]**

What do you like best about your job as president of the United States? What is the worst part about your job? Did you want to be president when you were little? I hope you have time to answer my questions. **[BODY]**

Sincerely, **[CLOSING]**

Tommy

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Dear President Bush,

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Sincerely,

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