

### Dear Santa

Nothing lights up the holidays like reading kids' actual letters to Santa Claus. Learn about the history of corresponding with Santa Claus and then read the letters aloud or print and share them throughout the month.

#### Ideas to enhance the activity:

- Ask staff, family members, friends, etc. if they have any letters to Santa Claus from kids that they can bring in to share with the group.
- If you have kids that visit the building who would like to write a letter to Santa, they can use our [letter template](#). Adults can do it just for fun, too!



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### Dear Santa

#### Introduction: Stern Santa Claus

In the early 1800s, Santa Claus was thought of more like a strict school principal or truant officer than a jolly deliverer of toys. While “good kids” received modest gifts from Santa, they were not encouraged to compose letters to Santa or jot down wish lists. Instead, parents often wrote letters to their children and signed them as Santa Claus. The letters tended to be a critique of the child’s behavior. Since they were written by “Santa,” the idea was that they would be extra effective. Plus, Mom and Dad could escape the heat for being the messenger of the critiques.

In 1853, Fanny Longfellow, the wife of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, left her children this letter on the fireplace Christmas morning:

*You have picked up some naughty words which I hope you will throw away as you would sour or bitter fruit. Try to stop to think before you use any and remember if no one else hears you God is always near. Santa Claus*

#### Santa After the Civil War

The amount of mail sent picked up dramatically during the Civil War. More letter carriers were hired, and, in urban centers, the postal workers brought mail directly to people’s homes, rather than to a post office. Once the war ended and people began relocating around the country, the post office became more efficient, so postage prices were at their most reasonable. People began to enjoy receiving mail, and sending mail also became a hobby. Stamps were cheap enough to allow kids to “waste” one or two on letters to Santa Claus. Gradually parents stopped writing as Santa as much, and kids’ letters became more frivolous.

## A Funny Glimpse into Children's Minds

Letters to Santa became less formal over the years, and they offer a unique perspective into the inner life of kids and reflect the era in which the children grew up. We collected letters to Santa Claus that friends and family shared with us, along with some that parents shared on internet sites. Several patterns emerged in the letters, so they are sorted accordingly. (We left in most of the spelling and grammar mistakes.)

### Letter Style #1: Throw Your Sibling Under the Bus

*Dear: Santa Claws*

*My baby brother can't have presents this year. He is so bad. He can't talk yet but... I can take his presents because I'm nice and don't hurt people like the baby does.*

*Dear Santa,*

*I can't lie to you. Marjorie is not good. I know she's my sister, but if she says she's good, she is not telling the truth. She tore a page out of a book and wrote on her wall with crayon. She cut bangs in her doll's hair. The bangs are so ugly. I have to take care of her toys for her, or she will ruin them.*

*Sincerely, Elizabeth*

### Letter Style #2: Special Requests and Directives

*Santa,*

*I wish my dad's truck will be unstuck. If you can grant that wish it will be a miracle.*

*Dear Santa,*

*Me and my brother have been so good. So good! But first things first. I have been practicing being an elf on the shelf. I can sit on a shelf and not move for over half an hour. Can you make me become an elf on the shelf? My brother wants to be a reindeer. When I'm on the shelf, he practices flying. He can fly over three inches! He's practicing right now. I have to go sit on the shelf more.*

*Thank you.*

*Dear Santa:*

*If you bring a present that needs batteries please bring battieries.*

*Dear Santa,*

*Please leave before 6 a.m.*

*My alarm goes off at 6:00 a.m.*

*p.s. my stocking is on the left.*

*Santa,*

*I want a shark that goes underwater and grabs corndogs that are already cooked.*

*Santa, I am not saying I don't believe in you but I would really like to have a picture of us together so I know for sure and can show people. Just wake me up. It's okay. No one else has to know. Thanks Santa. You're the best. Eli*

*Dear Santa,*

*I left some cookies for you. Please share them with the reindeer. You can take some to go, too. I have some more good news. I don't need you to buy or make me a present. I just need you to pick it up for me. Last year when we were moving my mom lost my toy kitchen. She says it must have gone to the wrong house. Please pick it up for me and bring it to my house. I wrote an L on the back of the stove.*

*Lenore*

### Letter Style #3: The “Hidden” Big Present

*Dear Santa:*

*I would like these things.*

*Legos*

*Doll*

*Crayons*

*Stuffed animal*

*Diamond earrings*

*Monopoly*

*Are you getting Mrs. Claus anything? Julie*

*Santa, I want an order of French fries, a computer, and a chicken nugget.*

*Dear Santa: Here is my list. Thank you.*

*Markers, Legos, candy, private jet, team sweatshirt, toy car. Good luck getting back to the North Pole. Love, Lauren*

*p.s. dad left coffee and beer out.*

*Dear Santa, I would really just like some practical things for my room. Like a few posters, a blanket that is dark blue, a Harry Potter chess set, a large flat screen TV with movie channels and Nintendo, and a sign for the door that says KEEP OUT. Xoxo, Kylie*

### Letter Style #4: Cold, Hard Cash

*Dear Santa,*

*How are you? Well, enough chit chat. If you can't make my presents don't be too hard on yourself. You can just leave tens and ones of money and I'll buy them. Merry Christmas.*

*Ho. Ho. Ho.*

*Santa, I'm so sorry of what I did in the past and thank you for the Christmas letter. I love it, but what I want for Christmas this year is 53 million dollars. Please write another letter this year. I love you.*

*Dear Santa,*

*I have gotten really good grades this year and did a lot of chores. So here's my little list. I figured one thing for each A and B.*

1. \$39.99
2. \$14.00
3. \$56.25
4. \$7.02
5. \$18.65
6. \$1.99

*Thanks, Santa. Pet the reindeer for me! Jayden*

## Letter Style #5: Pets and Other Animals

*Dear Santa, You better bring me a pony this year. Or there will be consequences.*

*Dear Santa:*

*Cat*

*Gato*

*Chat*

*Katt*

*Dear Santa: You don't have to get me all these things. Just three of them is ok. A giraffe, a small horse or pig, a regular-sized horse or pig, a ferret, or a dog.*

*p.s. I'll take a kitten, too. From, Kyle*

*Dear Santa,*

*Last year I asked you for a turtle. It was very important to me. It was the only thing I wanted. I was going to name him Sheldon. I behaved very well all year and had all As in school. On Christmas, I opened a box from you. There was a turtle inside. But he was a toy. HAR HAR Santa. This year, I will be more specific. I want a real, LIVE, pet turtle that likes to eat lettuce and will walk on a leash with me and watch TV with me and also bite people I do not like. Please send one without salmonella because that is why my mother says I can't have one.  
Love, Penelope*

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# LETTER TO SANTA



*Dear Santa,*

This year, I have been very:

NAUGHTY

NICE



All I want for Christmas this year is:



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*With love,*

