

How to write an advocacy letter

Many climate, environmental, and social justice organizations encourage their supporters to sign one or more petitions which they expect will obtain the attention of the politician or company targeted. You may have signed some, however, personal letters from individuals on issues of concern are more impactful and effective in the long run.

Here are some tactics for writing a letter that will get your desire for change heard.

You will need to determine the best way to contact the politician or company. Take the time to find out who to address the letter to. Before writing the letter, you may need to do some research so that your letter is backed up by facts, including reliable statistics. The examples below are included as learning aids.

1. Subject line. It should grab attention and summarize your main request.

e.g. *"Bike lanes needed for my commute to high school"* or *"Ban logging of Ancient BC forests now!"*

2. Identify yourself. If the official is the representative of your riding (City Councilor, MLA, or MP) or if you have been their loyal customer let them know that.

e.g. *"I am writing as a constituent of your riding, Vancouver Fairview"* or *"I am writing as a customer who has always loved your product."*

3. Say something nice. If the company or official has done anything deserving of praise, you can get on their good side by offering a bit of gratitude.

e.g. *"I applaud the recent moves by your government to protect some Old-Growth forests in BC"* or *"I applaud your recent addition of a sustainable clothing line."*

4. Present the issue. So often, there is a disconnection between what the company or government's policy states, and the actions implemented on the ground.

4a. Elaborate briefly on the policy. e.g. continuing with the theme in point 3, *"The Old Growth task force report commissioned in 2020 by the BC government recommended a ban on logging old growth forests that are at-risk to loss of biodiversity. Your government promised to implement all of the recommendations in September, 2020."*

4b. Highlight the disconnection. e.g. *"However, the amount protected is only about 1.5% of the total area designated as 'Old-Growth'. And logging old-growth continues at the same non-sustainable rate as in the previous administration"*.

4c. Highlight what is at stake. e.g. *"Ancient forests with huge, rapidly growing trees are the most productive forests for sequestering carbon and thus combating climate change. They serve as spiritual refuges, and only they (not tree farms) promote biodiversity."*

5. State why this issue is important to you personally. This is the place where your values can shine forth. e.g. *"I fear that if the rate of logging of the ancient forests is not diminished, there will soon be none left. BC's ancient forests are a treasured gift from the Earth, and conservation of the remaining giants is our responsibility."*

6. Provide a specific request. e.g. *"I am asking you, as Minister of Forests, to issue an immediate moratorium on the logging of high productivity ancient forests while new forestry policies are discussed with stake-holders."* And if there is a complication linked to the action you are requesting, provide a solution. e.g. *"Conservation financing of the affected First Nation would provide an income alternative to logging, such as conservation stewardship/indigenous guardians."*

It is important to provide documentation of where you obtained your information: e.g. [Source 1](#) and [Source 2](#).

7. End by thanking the recipient of your letter for their consideration and add that you look forward to hearing their response. Provide contact information (email, phone number and optionally your address).

Things to avoid in your letter:

Do not exaggerate the facts. Do not be disrespectful. Do not stray off-topic. Do not be wordy – one page only.