

5. Think about these two types of questions and list some advantages and disadvantages to each:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Closed-ended questions		
Open-ended questions		

6. Practice changing questions from closed to open and from open to closed. For example, “Do you support the current minimum wage” is a closed question that could be changed to an open question by writing it this way: “What do you think is a fair minimum wage?” Use this space to re-write some of your questions:

7. In your small group, choose 2-3 questions that will help you understand an elected official’s position on your issue. If your concern is the minimum wage, some appropriate questions might be: “What will you do to increase the minimum wage?” or “What will you do to make sure people can live off the minimum wage?” or “How will you protect small businesses if the minimum wage goes up?”

8. Finally, compose a letter to a candidate or elected official about your concern. Include a couple of questions that you have crafted in this activity. Each one in your group could pose the same question(s) to different candidates/elected officials -- local or national. Use the template and model provided as a guide if you like. Use the rubric to evaluate your letter.

9. Over time, write more letters about more issues. Collect them in a portfolio. Add any responses you receive from the candidates. Find out what responses your classmates received. Write a summary of what you have learned. Share it with your classmates.

Letter Writing Template and Sample

Use this template and sample to help you write your letter.

Use the rubric on the next page to see all the parts you need to include and to measure your progress.

Template:

	Today's Date
Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Salutation,	
Indented paragraph #1 – should include a few sentences. In the first paragraph you should introduce yourself and say why you are writing.	
Indented paragraph #2 – should include a few sentences. The second paragraph should include more substance and details about why you are writing.	
Indented paragraph #3 – should include a few sentences. The third paragraph should conclude the letter and perhaps say something about next steps if appropriate.	
Sincerely,	
<i>[your signature here]</i>	
Your name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	

Sample:

	September 4, 2020
Donald Trump	
The White House	
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW	
Washington, DC 20500	
Dear President Trump,	
I am writing to tell you that one of my biggest concerns is the minimum wage. I work in adult literacy, and I see many people who cannot survive on the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour – even if they work full-time. I am your constituent, and I have some questions for you about the minimum wage.	
What do you think about the “Raise the Minimum Wage Act of 2019,” which proposes to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour? What do you have to say to families that have parents working full-time minimum wage jobs, but they still live in poverty? What other policies are you considering that will ease the burdern of the working poor?	
In July 2019, the House of Representatives passed the Raise the Minimum Wage Act, but the majority of the members of the Senate are opposed to the bill. According to the House Committee on Education and Labor, raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would give 33 million workers a raise. The Congressional Budget Office predicts that with this raise, about 1.3 million families will no longer be living in poverty. These families include 600,000 children! Please reply and let me know how you plan to use your voice and your power to make sure more people earn a living wage!	
Sincerely,	
<i>Cynthia</i>	
Cynthia Peters	
44 Farnsworth St.	
Boston, MA 02210	

Letter Writing Rubric

This rubric will be used to evaluate your letter. Study the rubric to see what the teacher will be looking for when he or she grades your letter. After you get your feedback, re-write your letter and see where you can increase your points.

	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	TOTAL
Letter parts	Your letter includes: 1) date, 2) recipient's address, 3) salutation, 4) at least three distinct paragraphs, 5) your signature, 6) your address.	Your letter has four out of the six letter parts.	Your letter has three of the six letter parts.	Your letter has two or fewer letter parts.	
Presentation	Margins are present. Your letter is neatly written or typed.	Margins are not consistent. Your letter is neatly written or typed.	Margins are not consistent. Your handwriting is hard to read or your typing has a lot of mistakes.	Margins are not present. Your handwriting or typing is not legible.	
Conventions	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar are excellent. There are fewer than five errors.	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar are very good. There are fewer than ten errors.	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar distract the reader and interfere with meaning. There are 15 errors or less.	Punctuation, spelling, and grammar significantly distract the reader. There are more than 20 errors.	
Content	Your message is clear and precise. Your letter has three or more paragraphs and includes details. Your letter encourages a response from the reader.	Your message is clear and demonstrates understanding. Your letter contains only two paragraphs. Your letter does not encourage a response from the reader.	Your message is mostly clear. Your letter is only one paragraph in length.	Your message is unclear or disorganized.	
Voice	Your voice is strong, clear, and passionate. You show that you care about the issue.	Your voice is strong but not very passionate.	Your voice is not very strong or passionate	Your voice is weak.	
TOTAL					