

The Art of Writing A Good Fund Raising Letter

Paraphrased by Maggie Haggberg, Creative Director for Russ Reid Company

Write from your heart-not your head

Use feeling words. Get down to the level of your own feelings- then express them in a warm and personal way.

Establish a personal relationship with your reader

Try to visualize who your reader is and then use “you and me” words in the present tense that put your letter on a one-to-one level. For example:

I am writing you today because I want you to know how important your help is.

Use words that carry an emotional tone

Remember you want your reader to feel. Don’t sensationalize or manipulate, but do find words that are descriptive and precise.

Be reasonable

Your letter should not be all emotion; you need to use specific facts to build the case for your appeal. Don’t overload the reader with lots of data. Appeal to human compassion, justice, love, and caring rather than to program and process.

With your help, our twenty-five athletes will be able to finally have a complete uniform.

Vs

Our athletes need new uniforms.

Use short words, sentences, and paragraphs

Eighty percent of your words should be two syllables or less.

No sentence should be more than 12 words.

No paragraph should contain more than three sentences.

Tell a story to help illustrate the need

The need to do something can seem remote unless you show how the problem affects the life of a particular person. For example:

Before Billy became a Special Olympics athlete, he spent most of his time lonely, riding his bike around the neighborhood. Now when he is not at practice for the up-coming bowling tournament, he spends most of his time with his new Special Olympics friends.

Inform but don't moralize

In an appeal letter, your job is to tie into your reader's desire to help and to make a difference in the life of someone else. For example:

As someone who cares for individuals with cognitive disabilities, you can help them find the positive recognition they so richly deserve.

Vs

As an American, you ought to help us.

Include a sense of urgency

Put a time frame to your appeal. Convince your reader this is a serious need so they won't toss your letter away. Tell the reader specifically what will happen if your goal is not met.

If we cannot raise the \$1,000 needed for transportation, we will be unable to take our athletes to this year's track meet in Eau Claire.

Tell what the donor's gift will do in making a difference in the life of your athletes

Your gift of \$20 will help Billy and others like him be able to attend the...