

How to Be a Pen Pal to a Prison Inmate

Please use your return address as *(we do not recommend using your home address):*

Example: Pat J. (NEVER use last name)

Prison Ministry

<Name of Church>

<address of church>

<city, state, zip>

1. Choose appropriate things for letters and tell him/her you are their pen pal. There are nice pictures of nature and animals from magazines or the Internet. News items, prayers, and inspirational stories are all welcomed and will be shared. Postcards are welcomed too. Everything decorates their little bulletin board.
2. Female inmates are not allowed perfume so if you spray your letter with perfume, they will love that.
3. If you ever want to send a gift, inmates appreciate magazine subscriptions and books. These are the only gifts they can receive. Books must be mailed directly from an approved publisher or bookstore (Walmart is approved, Amazon is NOT).
4. Inmates **May Not** receive stamps, unused postcards, bookmarks, medals, any food item, or calendars. We recommend that requests for money be ignored; financial support is **not** the goal of the penpal program, spiritual support is.
5. Inmates like cards with beautiful scenes and artistry. Do not send the ones with music and things like balloons or glitter. Those are not allowed. Just a nice card with your note is such a gift to them. Removable clip art and stickers are not allowed.
6. Long letters are not critical. Find out about your pen pal and keep it simple. Pictures are welcomed but we recommend that you avoid sending personal photos of yourself or your family until you have at least been writing regularly to the inmate for over a year. Family pets are nice to hear about and photos are welcome. You may get long letters or short post cards. Just remember, your mail is treasured even if they do not know how to articulate it. You can even tell them about your travels. They live/travel vicariously thru you and will celebrate your joys and pray for your needs.
7. Ask him/her simple questions like – what makes you smile? What is your favorite color? Do you like to sing, skate, dance, swim, or draw? What are your hobbies? What are you interested in learning about? Inspire a dream: ask him/her if they could do anything they wanted and they knew they could not fail, what would that be? What would that look like? Ask your pen pal questions, so you can get to know them. (Do not ask all at one time, but get to know your pen pal through questions over a period of time.)
8. Offer spiritual support through a Bible verse or a poem or a prayer, etc. Let him/her know that you and others are keeping them in prayer.

You may obtain additional information about your penpal's sentence and reason for incarceration on the ADOC website. <https://corrections.az.gov/public-resources/inmate-datasearch> using their ADC number.