



Hello:

Thank you for your desire to provide encouragement and support to inmates. We are so glad you have decided to become part of the pen-pal ministry through Under the Door. Before you begin communicating with a prisoner, we would like to take the time to make sure all your questions are answered and you feel great about your involvement.

First, your role is more significant than you might imagine. You may be the only contact that the prisoner has with the outside world. Many times relationships have been broken with the prisoner's family and friends due to a multitude of reasons. By being a pen-pal you have an awesome opportunity to shine light into their lives just by writing and sharing God's Word with them. You are encouraged to speak from your own experiences, detailing how you dealt with a situation with Christ's help, or the reliance on His Word.

When writing your first letter to an inmate, we ask that you use your first name and last initial only. Start off by just introducing yourself; it doesn't have to be lengthy. Provide your pen-pal with some basic facts about you: where you were born, education, career, military, married, what church you attend, and what your hobbies consist of. Your main focus in the first couple letters (and henceforth) is to build trust. Your letters should be filled with genuine questions about the life of your pen-pal. By starting off with basic questions to them, you will be able to lead into more in-depth questions with each response. This is a relationship that you are building through Christ, so let your pen-pal know how you came to Christ and what activities you are involved in at your church. If the relationship develops such that your pen-pal is seeking spiritual counsel and direction from you, that's great! However, please refrain from offering unsolicited advice (sounding "preachy") without your pen-pal's consent.

The Do's and Don'ts of corresponding with an inmate:

1. DO remember the main purpose of the pen-pal ministry is Christian correspondence (especially encouragement and support).
2. DO use the church address or a PO Box at the post office.
3. DO encourage and pray for your prisoner friend regularly.
4. DO try to write at least twice a month.
5. DO listen well and give hope through God's Word.
6. DO be aware that prisoners may have emotional ups and downs. You just might be able to provide some emotional stability.
7. DO be aware of con games (asking for money, etc. If unsure, please ask Ben Blobaum)
8. DO be prepared for the possibility of unwanted romantic overtures. Please let them know that is not permitted in this ministry and that you will stop writing.
9. DO check prison regulations before sending any gifts, books, magazines, or tapes.
10. DO ask Ben Blobaum for advice or assistance.
11. DO enjoy and celebrate the relationship God is blessing you and the prisoner with!
12. DON'T give legal advice or counsel in regards to a prisoner's case.
13. DON'T send money for financial support or legal fees. Also, DO NOT offer to co-sign loans or process money orders.
14. DON'T ask why they are incarcerated.
15. DON'T provide prisoner with any one else's name or address for them to write.
16. DON'T give out your telephone number or agree to accept collect calls.
17. DON'T send photos – unless they are in a group with permission from others.

We hope that this information helps guide you in building a relationship of Christian friendship with an inmate through the pen-pal ministry. By participating in this ministry, you are playing a crucial role in bringing hope to those who need it. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Ben Blobaum: ben@underthedoar.org.

Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering (Hebrews 13:3).