

LETTER-WRITING WORKSHOP HOW-TO GUIDE

SCHOOLS



BEFORE LETTER WRITING

What to prepare:

- paper
- pens
- letter-writing supplies, such as stickers, glitter, magazines and glue
- envelopes and stamps (for the payment of the stamps you can either ask individuals to bring a gold coin donation, check in with your school to see if they will help out, or you can all band together and create a fundraising event to pay for stamps, snacks and future events!)
- snacks
- sign in sheet to record the details of your attendees
- a laptop or USB with any audio or videos that you would like to show



WHAT SHE MAKES

Why write a letter?

- Brands care what their customers think
- They get a lot of comments on social – far less people write letters
- Personalised messages stand out

OXFAM Australia

GETTING STARTED

If you are hosting outside of the classroom:

Make sure you have a sign posted at the door so everyone knows what you're doing. If your event begins at 2pm, it's a good idea to kick things off formally at 2.10pm – this gives latecomers a bit of leeway.

Remember to give an Acknowledgement to Country at the start of any formal event – it's super important to do it correctly. You can find information on an Acknowledgement to Country [here](#).

Welcome and thank your attendees, and introduce yourselves as Oxfam activists. Tell them a bit about what you've been doing with this campaign, and why you got involved in the first place.

Let your guests know where the bathrooms are, where the emergency exits are, and what they can expect from the session – giving a brief agenda overview is a good idea.

Ask your attendees to introduce themselves quickly. Their name and suburb is fine, or you can ask them to list their favourite colour or their favourite food – or get creative with your icebreakers!

THE FORMAL STUFF

You'll need to give your attendees a brief run-down of the campaign so far. Don't worry, you're not expected to be an expert. You're a volunteer activist, just like them.

If you have access to an Oxfam video, now is the time to play it. You can find a 10-minute video series to help everyone get on the same page about fast fashion [here](#).

You can find a brief campaign overview and see which brands have committed to change [here](#).

You can find an updated list of which CEOs the What She Makes campaign is currently directing letters to by visiting [this page](#).

It's also great to let your classmates know about what you've been doing for this campaign so far. As a school led campaign activist, you're one of our strongest youth ambassadors so be proud and tell your story of how you became involved in fighting for living wages.

WHAT SHE MAKES

What makes a good letter?

- Personalised – what's your connection to the issue
- Explain the problem – why is this bad?
- Offer a solution – pay a living wage!
- Finish on a high note

Take some notes as we go through the presentation in preparation for your letter

OXFAM Australia

WHAT SHE MAKES

Now it's time to answer the following

- Personalised – what's your connection to the issue
- Explain the problem – why is this bad?
- Offer a solution – pay a living wage!
- Finish on a high note

OXFAM Australia

LET'S GET WRITING!

Now is the time to sit back and get writing!

This is supposed to be fun as well as productive, so get to know your attendees while you write. Share your drafts, compare letters and talk about the campaign. This is a great opportunity to recruit newcomers to your campaign community, so make the most of it.

Give your attendees about 30–45 minutes to complete their letters. If people finish early, ask them to write another letter – perhaps to a different campaign target? They can also work with others if they need any assistance writing their own letters.

Sample Letter:

6/08/2018

Molly Coburn
3/25 Cooper St
Sunny Hills
NSW, 2010
mollyc@oxfam.org.au
0455 035 320

Keep your greeting formal and polite!

To Mr. Guy Russo (CEO Department Stores, Westfarmers),

My name is Molly, and I am a 26 year old living in Sydney, Australia. I often shop at Kmart for things like tshirts, leggings and basics. I love that Kmart provides an **affordable, accessible** option for the every-day Australian when shopping.

Let them know that you're a customer - companies care about what their customers think!

However, I was really upset to hear that the women who are making the clothes for Kmart aren't paid enough to afford a decent standard of life. It makes me really sad to know that when I buy a tshirt from Kmart, the woman who made it can't afford to see her children live in a decent house. She has to work more than 80 hours every week, and still can't afford to have a decent standard of living.

Introduce the problem, give it a human face! Tell them about Fatima!

I know that you make big profits – in 2016 you made over 5.18 billion dollars in profit! I also know that you get paid almost 10 million dollars every year. It doesn't seem fair that the woman who makes your clothes only earns 39c every hour, and that she would have to work for 4000 years to earn the same amount as you.

Tell the companies what they can do to makes things better

We want you to pay a living wage, instead of a minimum wage, to the women who make our clothes. If you just increased her wage by 1% of the retail cost of a tshirt, it would mean that the lives of the women making our clothes in Bangladesh would be greatly improved.

Kill them with kindness! Congratulate them and encourage rather than berate - we'd rather talk as friends than enemies.

After Rana Plaza collapsed in 2011, you lead the way by signing onto the Bangladesh Fire and Safety Accord, and publishing your factory locations online. You did the right thing, and as a consequence, other companies followed your lead – making the working environment for Bangladeshi women safer. Now, we'd love for you to take the next step, and commit to paying a living wage.

Regards,

Keep your sign off polite and friendly, and remind them you're a customer.

Molly Coburn (a Kmart customer)

WRAPPING UP

Ask your attendees how they went with their letters. It's a good idea to set aside 20 minutes for attendees to share their letters with the group. You might like to share your letter first to kick things off. Remember, there is no right or wrong — every contribution to the group is valued.

Spend five minutes enveloping, addressing and stamping your letters. Remember to personalise the envelope using the stickers, glitter and glue — a CEO is much more likely to notice an eye-catching envelope.

Before everyone leaves, spend a bit of time talking about next steps for the campaign. A good campaign should always have next steps mapped out.

- Invite attendees to the next event or see if the group is interested in getting together to plan another event
- Thank everyone for attending and reiterate how important this workshop was for the campaign. Congratulate everyone on their activism!

Now is the time to mail all of your letters. Once they are all sealed in their envelopes and complete with stamps, pass them onto your school office, or the designated teacher or student who will be mailing them.

Give yourselves a big pat on the back. You've done an amazing job, and this work is invaluable for our campaigns. Thank you for being such a wonderful lead activist! Should you have any questions or want to share your success, shoot an email to schools@oxfam.org.au

Check out the What She Makes how-to guide for the next activism activity you can get involved in.