

MATH 221/222 Pen Pal Pointers

Your pen pal letters will be kept in a folder with clasps, and (perhaps) pockets. Add paper as you go along for you and your pen pal to use. Decorate the folder with a math theme. Be sure your name, and your pen pal's name are on the front of the folder. In the bottom right hand corner print the name of your pen pal's teacher.

For your first pen pal letter you should:

- Introduce yourself; tell your pen pal about your background and your interests. Mention your major, hometown, siblings, favorite sports, and other recreation activities, why you want to be a teacher, and anything else that will help your pen pal get to know you.
- Ask your pen pal about their families, their siblings, and pets. You might inquire about their favorite colors, sports, teams, TV shows and games and what they like best about school.
- Ask what they are doing in math right now.
- Ask your pen pal a math question that is age and grade level appropriate, which corresponds with the SC Standards for that grade level. A link for these standards can be found on the Math 221 webpage.
- Include a picture of yourself. If there are other people in the picture, tell your pen pal who they are.

Things to remember for all pen pal letters:

- Print legibly. Set an example of what good, clear printing should look like. Don't use all caps or odd styles. Use correct grammar and punctuation. Your work is a model for your pen pal.
- Make your letter an attention-getter by using such things as color, stickers, interesting pictures.
- Don't skimp on paper. Don't try to cram too much into a small space. You might want to have your letter on one page and your math questions on another.
- When you ask math questions, don't make them all purely computational. Use words. Ask "word-problem" questions. However, keep in mind the grade level and ask appropriate questions.
- It is tempting to include small gifts. Let's agree not to do so.
- Always answer your pen pal's questions.
- If your pen pal includes a math problem that is done incorrectly, gently point it out and suggest a correction. It is also a good idea to find some correct reasoning in what they wrote (even if the end result is wrong) and give them some praise for it.
- Look for clues to what your pen pal is interested in and relate it to math.
- When you ask your pen pal a math question, leave space at the end of your question for the answer.
- If you ask your pen pal a question and it does not get answered in the next letter, ask it again. If it is a math question, perhaps a hint is necessary. Ask if your pen pal would like a hint.
- Your pen pal is really excited about getting a letter from you and about writing to you. Don't take it lightly. Don't put off writing until the last minute. Make this a priority.
- Have fun.

Other things to remember:

- Remember to put only wide-ruled paper in the journal due to the fact that this is what your pen pal is most likely used to using.
- Be sure to keep in mind who your audience is. Write legibly and maybe larger than normal. You may find that you need to skip lines in order for your pen pal to fully comprehend your letter.
- You have a whole semester to get to know your pen pal so do not overload him/her with questions in the first letter; you may not get the response you were looking for. Ask a few questions per letter and feed off of what your pen pal shows interest in.