



## WRITING PROMPTS: 101 STORIES, ANECDOTES AND IDEAS TO SHARE IN A LETTER

1. Describe what you saw on your walk (to work, school, a café, etc)
2. The last time you felt genuinely happy (describe where you were, what you were doing etc)
3. What happens when your extended family gets together? Paint a picture with words
4. Imagine you host your own podcast or TV talk-show. Who (living or dead) would you most love to have as a guest? What questions would you ask them? What is it about them that fascinates you so much?
5. Describe a tricky time or event in your life that turned out to be a blessing in disguise
6. A verbal time capsule: describe everything you'd put in a time capsule today, and why (your letter might end up becoming its own time capsule!)
7. If you ever make new year's resolutions or set goals (or something similar), share them in your letter. Show how you hope to achieve them. Ask the recipient to hold you accountable and check up on how you are going
8. Who taught you to cook or how did you learn? What lessons/memories/experiences have stayed with you?
9. Who is the best cook you know? What is/was your favourite thing that they made? Describe the cook, describe the food, explain why they are your favourite
10. What are your big plans for the next 12 months? These could be personal, professional, education-related, travel-related, etc. Maybe you could seek advice: "We will be renovating our kitchen - any tips from when you did it?"
11. A new goal or task you recently set for yourself, what you hope to achieve from it, and how you're going so far (successes, hurdles, lessons learned, etc)
12. Talk about the weather (yes! That's ok!). Describe the season / day, but to make it interesting and personal, put yourself in it: how have you been interacting with the weather?
13. Tell them something funny. Something that happened to you, or that you witnessed, or that you saw on TV or read in a magazine

14. Go to an art gallery alone, take writing paper and a pen with you. When you come across something that makes you think or feel (it doesn't matter what), write about those thoughts and feelings
15. Still at the gallery, write another letter. This time, just sit down and people-watch. Describe what you see. How are people interacting with the artworks? With each other? What are they wearing and doing?\*
16. What is your favourite kind of place to go in nature? Describe it, and share what makes it your favourite
17. Describe an experience that caused you to change a long-held opinion
18. If you have small children in your life, retell some of the funny things they say. I do this on my blog sometimes (like [this one here](#): and [this one here](#)).
19. Write about something that has been on your mind lately. It might be political, ethical, philosophical, a book you've read... anything that you are pondering over. You don't need to reach any conclusions. Ponder on paper
20. Describe where you live. Take the reader on a walk through your neighbourhood, describing the homes, shops, trees, people etc
21. What is the best advice you've ever received? Now, tell a specific story about one time when you put that advice to use
22. This was an essay question we once had in school. I remember thinking it was pretty weird, but kind of fun. Why don't you try answering it in a letter to a friend? "If you could be invisible for one day, what would you do? Outline the events of this imaginary day."
23. Tell a funny story about a lie that you told when you were a child, or a trick you played, and the consequences. (I once lied that I was sick so I didn't have to go to school, and ended up convincing myself so well that I started vomiting; when my father was three he thought that closing his eyes made him invisible, so he tried to steal food from a grown-up dinner-party by walking into the room with eyes closed and groping about with his hands)
24. Describe an event that brought you and your family closer together
25. Share a memory from high school. It might be something happy, sad, funny or strange, that's up to you. Just share a little piece of your past in the letter
26. What does your garden look like right now? Describe it in detail. Try to think of all the senses, not just sight. What can you hear? Smell? Touch? Even taste - are there herbs, fruits, vegetables or edible flowers you like to harvest? If you live near the sea, can you taste salt on the breeze today?
27. Tell the story of your most precious childhood possession
28. If you don't have a garden, describe the view from your window. Again, try to look for details you'd perhaps normally ignore

29. Take a short walk, with your camera. It might only be one block, but challenge yourself to take at least 10 photographs. Often, looking for things to photograph makes you more mindful of the little things, and helps you see the world in a different way. When you get back home, write about some of the things you noticed, or what you were thinking of during that walk
30. What was your career goal when you were nine years old?
31. Describe tasting something for the first time. What was it? How did you react? What do you think of it now? (My husband grew up in a country town in Australia and tells a great story about the first time his grandmother cooked something truly different for everybody. The whole extended family came over to taste this strange and exotic meal that nobody had heard of or tasted before. It was an Event with a capital E, and was talked about a long time afterwards. The 'exotic food' was lasagne)
32. Write your travel bucket-list. Where do you want to go, and what do you want to see? What do you want to do there? Why are the places on your list there on your list?
33. What kinds of souvenirs do you collect while travelling? Describe some of them, and their significance to you
34. Tell them about a recent book/movie/podcast/blog post/magazine article that has impacted you in some way. Describe it, then tell them what it meant to you
35. Describe what just happened, or what's happening now. Where are you sitting? What does it look like? Who else is there? How are you feeling? Or, what have you just done? Finished homework? Returned home from shopping? Seen a movie? Describe what you just did, again in details. Don't forget to include your thoughts and feelings, as well as your actions
36. Write a portrait of a family member, dead or alive. Simply start with "I am going to tell you about my Auntie Ivy," and then go on to say what she looked like, what she did, the way she spoke, how she dressed, and what made her interesting/lovable etc to you
37. Try spending a day/week/month without using any social media, then write a letter about what that was like
38. Rhythms and rituals. These are great to share. Earlier this year I wrote a blog post about some of the informal rituals that give rhythm to our days ([it's here](#)), and you could write about one of yours in your letter
39. Write five things about you that the reader doesn't know. This is a fun way to get to know new pen pals, but could also take your relationship with Nanna to the next level!
40. What is the most memorable thing you ever received in the mail?
41. Tell them about your chores (not kidding). Open your letter with "I'm carving out this time to write to you, though there's so much to be done," then describe a few of the jobs that await you. Folding washing is boring. Reading about how someone on the other side of the world battles overflowing baskets of laundry and keeps stepping on tiny Sylvanian Families toys just like you forges a connection between us, and opens a door to shared worlds

42. Share a line of poetry or a quote that you like, then explain why you like it. What does it make you think about? How does it make you feel?
43. Minimalism or clutter? Describe how you like to live and work, and what kind of environment inspires you creatively
44. Pick a holiday or celebration (birthdays, new year, Christmas etc) and describe how you celebrate it. What do you do, eat, wear? Who do you spend it with?
45. In letters to a friend or loved one, tell them one thing that is special about them. It could be a fun memory you have with the two of you, or something you appreciate or admire about them. Tell it in a story
46. Eavesdrop on public transport. Often, you'll catch snatches of some of the funniest / most interesting / most disturbing conversations behind you on the train, tram or bus. Retell and expand on one of those conversations in your letter
47. What is your hidden talent?
48. Has a book ever inspired you to do something for real? Like go to that place or eat that food? Tell the story of this. (Cookbook author and blogger Kate Young makes food inspired by the meals in her favourite books. Maybe you could try this, and write a letter about the results: [www.thelittlelibrarycafe.com](http://www.thelittlelibrarycafe.com))
49. What are some of the common traits said about your generation? Explain why you agree or disagree with these
50. Share a favourite recipe, and explain why that recipe is special to you
51. If you could choose your own name, what would it be, and why?
52. Write about something you miss. In her book "Write Back Soon," Karen Benke says, "I miss a lot of things... how my nana smelled of lemons and roses, the soups Joan made, my house by the creek, how my son would sit on my lap after school and rest his hands on my face."
53. Who did you admire while you were growing up? What did you admire about them? (Bonus points for story-telling: did you actually do things to try to be like that person? When I was five I had my hair cut to look like Tabitha from Bewitched because I thought maybe then I would develop magical powers with my nose)
54. What was life like for you when you were growing up? Describe where you lived: your town, your house, your school, the weather, how you got from A to B, the people in your life, etc. That might sound mundane to you, but imagine how interesting it would be to read a letter like this from someone on the other side of the world, or from someone two or three generations older (or younger) than you
55. Describe the exact moment when you realised you were turning into your mother or father
56. What would you do if you won the lottery?
57. Describe a new favourite place to visit (eg a new shop, café, park, gallery etc). Really flesh out what it is like so that the reader feels like they are there, and explain what makes it a favourite to you

58. What were some of your favourite books when you were a child? What were they about, and what made them so special?
59. What do you want to be doing when you're 80? (If you're 80, what do you want to be doing when you're 90?)
60. If you share any mutual family or friends with the person you're writing to, update them on the lives of people they know. My husband always complains that his mother forgets to tell him things, like that his cousin had a baby, or his nephew won a prize in the swimming carnival, or that they knocked down his old school to build a new one
61. Are there any historical events or urban legends about the town where you live? Tell one of these stories
62. Tell the story of a school excursion you once had. Where did you go? What did you see? What did you think of it at the time? Anything significant happen? (A friend told me recently that when she was in high-school and on an excursion into the city, a student fell out of the tram but the teacher just kept on going, so the rest of the class wouldn't miss the theatre. Yikes!)
63. Share a day in your life. What did you eat for breakfast? What things did you do and see throughout the day?
64. Have you changed your look lately? Describe your new haircut, clothes etc, and how they make you feel.
65. When I lived in New York, people would line up for everything. You'd see lines around the block for restaurants, cupcakes, movies, iPhones, the post office, anything! They weren't all fanatics - sometimes in a city as crowded as New York, you just have to suck it up and line up. Most of my friends in Australia can't fathom this. They'd rather stay home than line up. So... write in your letter what real or imagined thing you'd be willing to line up for
66. Share your fears, phobias and superstitions. Don't just list them, give a bit of detail as to what they are, and how they impact your life. Depending on who you're writing to and what you want to share, you can make this fun and light-hearted with funny stories to illustrate your foibles, or go a bit deeper and be more vulnerable about things that leave you unsettled
67. List 10 things, big or small, that you are grateful for right now
68. What is your personal credo or motto? How does it influence the way you live?
69. Describe a walk or drive that you take every day. What do you see?
70. Share something that worries or distresses you right now. Use your letter to seek solace
71. Are there any traditions that have been passed down from your family? Describe them, and share why you choose to continue those traditions
72. Most of us have some kind of physical dream house, one we walk past and fantasise about owning. Describe your dream house, and in your letter, imagine what your life would look like, lived in that house
73. Talk about a time when your pet really did seem like your best friend

74. We grew up in a bushfire-prone area and, during the summer months, my mother kept a bag packed beside the door, containing a change of clothes for all of us, and the photo albums, in case we had to race out in an emergency. The “[burning house project](#)” asks people from all over the world to share what they would take with them in the event of a fire. Using this as a prompt, describe what would go in your ‘bushfire bag’ and why it made the cut
75. Do you have a story of a haunting? Or something spooky that you can’t quite explain?
76. Looking back over your life so far, think about a moment or event that you now realise, with hindsight, was a turning point or important rite of passage? Describe it, and how it impacted you then, and now
77. Can money buy happiness? That’s me asking you. Now, start your letter like this: “Somebody recently asked me if money could buy happiness. Here is what I think about that...”
78. What is one of your earliest memories of music? Describe the music, the context, and what it is about that music that you remember even now
79. What is your dream job (whether you are doing it or not)? What makes it so special?
80. Describe a way in which travel changed you
81. Is there something you’ve always wanted to learn? A new hobby or skill? Something specific to cook in the kitchen? Another language? Share what it is, and what you would love to do with that new skill
82. Describe your favourite comfort food and what associations make it “comforting” to you. Maybe you could tell the story of a situation in which that food really worked for you
83. What are you looking forward to?
84. Tell the story of that time you met someone famous
85. What song lyrics did you used to get wrong? (I used to think John Travolta was singing “I got shoes, they’re multiplying” in Grease - because, you know, his feet were moving SO FAST when he danced)
86. Holidays from your childhood: where did you go and what did you do?
87. Are you a town mouse or a country mouse? Talk about this a bit (without judging or criticising the other kinds of mice)
88. Describe your favourite season and why it is your favourite. What do you like to do during that season?
89. Have you ever seen the movie Midnight in Paris? The protagonist Gil is an American screen-writer who travels back in time to 1920s Paris, and mixes with the literary and artistic heroes of the Lost Generation. For him, this is the “golden era.” There he meets a beautiful woman who, in turn, wishes she could travel back to the Belle Époque, the Paris of the 1890s. Others of his 1920s friends long to live during the Renaissance. Where and in what era would you live, if you could?
90. Write your own obituary. (What??) Author Brook McCalary talks about the benefits of doing this on the Slow Your Home podcast ([slowyourhome.com](#)) - it could be a fascinating and insightful process to go through in a letter to someone you trust

91. What did you like to collect when you were a child? What did you like about those things, and what did you do with them?
92. Describe an experience or event that changed the direction of your life
93. Tell a story about a time you were reminded that some parts of nature are actually still wild (ask me to tell you about the time I accidentally swam with wild dolphins and truth be told, I was terrified)
94. What is something interesting about your family history?
95. What's happening at your workplace or school right now? Talk about your role/duties, any upcoming events, any changes to the regular routine
96. Retell a memorable moment from a holiday (even if it was a long time ago)
97. Recount a time that you succeeded at something, despite having expected to fail
98. If you had a time machine, where would you go and what would you want to see? Why?
99. Describe a hobby or sport you love doing, and why you love it (explain how it works, and how you feel when you are doing it)
100. Talk about a time you took the road less travelled, and what the outcome was
101. Tell something your mother or father used to do that was really special to you. Even better if the letter is FOR your mother or father!

*\* Last year some friends and I took our daughters, who had all just turned four, to a Degas exhibition in Melbourne. We thought they would love it, especially the ballerinas. Instead, they wandered from room to room complaining "This is borrrrrring," right up until the last room, which displayed a number of paintings of women during their toilette. Suddenly, the girls became animated. "I see a bare bottom!" they squealed and giggled. "Another one! Nudie rudie!" They ran from painting to painting, pointing at every naked buttock in the exhibition and doubling over in gales of laughter. Old women with coiffed hair and oversized jewellery watched, first in displeasure, and then mostly with amusement, as we tried to round up and hush our daughters, who were enjoying the most delicious scandal of their little lives. I think that would have made a fun anecdote for a stranger to retell in a letter, if they'd happened to be sitting there watching.*