

Fundraising Ecuador

We Believe – Saint John

Fundraising tips for students

How to Write a Fundraising Letter

As you explore how to write a great fundraising letter, it's important to follow a few key steps in order to write the most compelling and effective letter possible. These steps include:

1. Address your recipient personally. By addressing your recipient by name, they won't feel like they are just one of many reading this letter. Be sure to personalize your outreach with names so each reader knows you value their individual support.

2. Tell a story. Show your reader the issue or problem you are working to address with a story. Give details about the people you're trying to help so it's clear how they can benefit from a donation..

3. Define the problem. Clearly outline the larger issues and problems the people of Ecuador are facing. Be as straightforward as possible when doing this.

4. Explain your mission and outline your goal. Explain your need and how it fits into your overall mission. Your readers should understand how their donations will be used and who will benefit from them. Make sure to clearly explain the impact of the donor's gift and how it will make a difference in your life and the life of others.

5. Explain how your donor can make an impact. Before donors give, they want to know exactly how their donation will make a difference in the world. You've already defined a problem for them; explain how their donation will solve the problem with specific actions. For example, if you're raising money for your trip to Ecuador, you can specify that a donation of \$50 will help to cover the cost of going to Ecuador and make a difference in your life and the lives of others in Ecuador!

6. Call the reader to action.

Explain the urgency of the situation so you can convince your readers to act quickly. In addition to following these steps, be sure to focus on the “you” and “we” language in your letter, but mostly focus on the “you.” Your outreach should be about your reader and the impact they can make, and it should directly appeal to them. Using “you” and “we” language is important and helps provide a touch of human interest to your fundraising letter.

How long should a fundraising letter be?

A fundraising letter should be concise. One page is a great length, but some stories take a little longer to tell. A good rule of thumb is to use exactly as many words to define the problem and ask donors to provide a solution—nothing more! You may also include extra materials (such as information about matching gifts, additional details about We Believe – Saint John, etc.). If you decide to make your fundraising letter longer than one page, be sure donors know what actions you want them to take by the end of the first page.

How should you send a fundraising letter?

Fundraising letters can be sent through a variety of channels, though the more effective ones tend to be via email and direct mail. In order to personalize your outreach, make sure your fundraising letters are addressed to a specific individual, which is accomplished easily through email and direct mail. Don't just write "Dear Donor" instead!

Why are fundraising letters important?

Fundraising letters are important because they give you an opportunity to demonstrate your financial needs, get donors involved with your cause, tell your emotional story, show donors why their gifts are important, and create a long-term relationship with your supporter.

How to Write a Donation Acknowledgement Letter

If your initial fundraising letter is successful and a supporter gives to your trip, it's imperative that you show your appreciation with a donation acknowledgment letter. Without your donors, you would not be able to go to Ecuador and be a part of life changing projects that impact you and others.

Sending out donation acknowledgment letters does more than just thank your supporters! It also helps promote a healthy and positive relationship between you and donors, setting up a solid foundation for future engagement. **Remember to send your letter soon after the donation is made so the engagement is fresh in the donor's mind.**

A simple thank you letter also can encourage donors to give again, increasing your donor retention rates.

To sum up

Here are six awesome tips for asking for donations using letters.

1. Use a bold headline

Think of a letter's headline as the subject line of an emailed donation appeal. It can't be vague or boring. You have to grab your readers' attention from the get go.

While the wording for your headline will differ depending on your intended audience as well as your organization's particular mission, it will generally sound something like, "Help [your name] raise money for [your trip to Ecuador]"

Get as creative as you want with your headlines. It will likely be the first thing that the reader sees, and you'll want to leave a good impression.

2. Keep it personal

Do **not** start off your letter with “Dear Donor,” or “To whom it may concern.” These letters will likely get thrown in the trash along with the other impersonal mail that your donors receive.

Instead, take the time to personalize your correspondence. If you’re sending out appeal letters to individuals, do some research to find out their preferred name. If a donor’s name is William but he goes by Bill, then call him Bill.

The same principle goes for letters sent to businesses. Instead of addressing the letter to the company at large, find out who is in charge of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Addressing the letter to that particular person will help establish a more personal connection and better rapport with the company you are asking for donations from.

Keeping things personal in your appeal letters goes beyond the address, however. You’ll need to make sure that you are sending the right letters to different groups of people.

3. Tell a story

Letters are the perfect medium to tell a story. Use your appeal letters to your organization's advantage and educate individuals about your origins or particular projects that you are working toward.

Keep in mind that you don't have a ton of space. Appeal letters really shouldn't be over a page, so whatever story you have to tell, make sure that you keep it short and to the point. You probably don't need to cover every tiny detail but provide readers with enough information to get them invested in your Ecuador trip.

Do you have a particular success story that was made possible because of recent donations? Are you working on current projects that need a little more additional funding? Tell these stories within your letter to appeal to you readers.

Stories within appeal letters are all about how you will make a difference.

4. Ask sincerely

After telling your story, it's time to make the actual appeal. This part of your letter is crucial. The way that you present your ask can either encourage a reader to give or can make them scoff and throw your letter in the trash before getting to the "Sincerely yours."

Asking sincerely is key. Make sure that you aren't begging for money; let donors know *why* you need donations and give them an incentive to give.

You laid the groundwork in the storytelling component of your letter, but the ask is where you get even more specific. Saying things like, "We need your money!" isn't going to cut it.

Instead, offer up solutions to the problems that you're trying to solve. "Your donation of will go toward helping me go on an Ecuador Service-Learning trip where we will tour and work with local students at a school, help local farmers, support local businesses.

When you make your appeal specific and sincere, you let your reader know that you will be a good steward of their funds. It is more likely that a reader will give to a cause they feel personally connected to than a general ask for money.

5. Don't forget the envelope

Great job! You've told your story, gotten personal with the reader, and made a stellar appeal. They're ready to give!

But wait, how are they supposed to give if they have no way of getting money to you? Make sure that you include information on how the donor is to send their money to you. You should also include more information like We Believe – Saint John website, physical address, phone number, and social media information within your letter to give donors other ways to get in touch with you once they place their donation in the mail or e transferred the funds to EF Tours.

6. Say thank you

Gratitude goes a long way. Say thank you after you receive a donor's donation by sending them a thank you card or giving them a call.

Whatever size donation someone makes, you should *always* follow up and say thank you. Thanking donors is the first step in encouraging donors to give in the future.