

Summer Adventures with Jessica and April



Celebrating Friendship Across
Miles: National Pen Pal Day



Unleashed Learning
Gateway

Jessica and April are best friends who live 500 miles apart. They met at a summer camp three years ago and have been pen pals ever since. Every summer, they write letters to each other, sharing their adventures and fun activities.

June 15, 2024

Dear April,

Hi there! How are you? I hope you're enjoying your summer break. It's been so sunny here in Brighton! My family and I went to the beach yesterday. We built the biggest sandcastle ever! It had towers and even a moat. We collected seashells to decorate it. I wish you could have been here to help.

I've also been busy with our community garden project. We planted tomatoes, carrots, and sunflowers. The sunflowers are already so tall! I love spending time there, getting my hands dirty and watching everything grow. How's your garden doing?

Write back soon and tell me all about your summer adventures!

Love,

Jessica

June 20, 2024

Dear Jessica,

Hey! It's so great to hear from you! I'm doing awesome, thanks. Your beach day sounds like so much fun. I can't believe you built such a cool sandcastle! I wish I could have seen it.

Here in Maplewood, we've been having a blast too. My brother and I went hiking in the woods behind our house. We found a hidden waterfall! It was so beautiful and peaceful. We even saw some deer drinking from the stream.

Our garden is coming along nicely. We planted strawberries, lettuce, and pumpkins. The strawberries are my favorite. They're so sweet and juicy. I've been helping my mom make strawberry jam. Maybe I can send you some!

Can't wait to hear more about your summer!

Hugs,

April

July 5, 2024

Dear April,

Guess what? We had a Fourth of July picnic, and it was amazing! There were so many fireworks. They lit up the sky with all kinds of colors. My dad grilled burgers and hot dogs, and we had watermelon for dessert. My little sister got all sticky and tried to hug me. It was hilarious!

I tried something new this week – paddleboarding! It was a bit tricky at first, but I got the hang of it. It's such a fun way to be on the water. Have you ever tried it?

Tell me more about your adventures. Did you do anything special for the Fourth of July?

Miss you tons,

Jessica

July 10, 2024

Dear Jessica,

Wow, your Fourth of July sounds fantastic! We had a barbecue too. My uncle makes the best ribs ever. We watched fireworks from our backyard. They were so loud, but so pretty!

I've never tried paddleboarding, but it sounds fun. Maybe I can convince my parents to take me sometime. This week, I went to a summer art camp. We did all sorts of cool projects, like tie-dye shirts and pottery. I made a vase for my mom. It's not perfect, but she loves it anyway.

Do you have any other summer plans? I'm going to a music festival next weekend with my friends. I can't wait!

Write soon!

Best,

April

July 25, 2024

Dear April,

Your art camp sounds awesome! I love tie-dye shirts. I made one a couple of years ago and still wear it all the time. The music festival must have been so cool! Did you have a favorite band?

I went camping with my family last weekend. We slept in a tent and roasted marshmallows over the campfire. We also went fishing in the lake nearby. I caught a fish! It was my first time fishing, so I was really excited.

Summer is flying by so fast. I can't believe it's almost August. I'm glad we have our letters to keep us close even though we're so far apart.

Talk to you soon!

Love,

Jessica

August 1, 2024

Dear Jessica,

Camping sounds like a great adventure! I've never been fishing, but I'd love to try it someday. The music festival was amazing! I got to see my favorite band, and we danced all night. It was the best weekend ever.

I've been spending a lot of time at the pool lately. It's been so hot here! My friends and I have been practicing our diving skills. I finally nailed a perfect dive yesterday. It was so satisfying!

Summer really is going by quickly. I'm so glad we write to each other. Your letters always make me smile.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Hugs,

April

As the summer came to an end, Jessica and April cherished their letters, knowing they have a special bond that distance couldn't break. They looked forward to many more summers filled with adventures and letters, keeping their friendship strong and vibrant.

Celebrating Friendship Across Miles: National Pen Pal Day

National Pen Pal Day, celebrated annually on June 1st, is a special day dedicated to the art of letter writing and the cherished relationships formed through correspondence. In an age where instant messaging and social media dominate our communication, National Pen Pal Day offers a nostalgic reminder of the joy and intimacy that comes from handwritten letters.

The History of Pen Pals

The concept of pen pals dates back centuries. Long before the advent of modern communication technologies, people relied on letters to keep in touch across long distances. The term "pen pal" specifically refers to people who regularly write to each other, typically without having met in person. This practice became especially popular during the 20th century, facilitated by various pen pal clubs and organizations that matched people from different parts of the world based on their interests.

The Joy of Letter Writing

Writing letters to a pen pal offers a unique and personal form of communication. Unlike the brevity of text messages or emails, letters provide an opportunity for more thoughtful and reflective expression. The physical act of writing, sealing, and mailing a letter adds a tangible and intimate element to the exchange. For many, receiving a letter in the mail brings a sense of excitement and anticipation that digital communications cannot replicate.

Building Bridges Across Cultures

Pen pals often come from different backgrounds, cultures, and countries, making this practice an excellent way to foster cross-cultural understanding and friendship. By sharing their daily lives, traditions, and perspectives, pen pals can broaden their horizons and develop a deeper appreciation for diversity. These exchanges can lead to lifelong friendships and even opportunities to visit each other in person.

Celebrating National Pen Pal Day

National Pen Pal Day is an opportunity to celebrate these unique friendships and the timeless art of letter writing. Here are a few ways to honor this day:

- 1. Start a Pen Pal Relationship:** If you don't already have a pen pal, consider starting one. There are many online platforms and organizations dedicated to connecting people with potential pen pals.
- 2. Write a Letter:** Take some time to write a heartfelt letter to your pen pal, or even to a friend or family member. Express your thoughts, share your experiences, and make it personal.
- 3. Share Your Story:** If you have a memorable pen pal experience, share it on social media using the hashtag #NationalPenPalDay. Encourage others to join in the celebration.
- 4. Organize a Letter-Writing Event:** Host a small gathering with friends or family where everyone writes letters. Provide stationery, stamps, and envelopes, and enjoy the creative process together.
- 5. Teach the Young Generation:** Introduce children to the joys of letter writing. Help them find a pen pal, perhaps through a school project or a pen pal club, and teach them the etiquette of correspondence.

The Modern Pen Pal

In today's digital age, the concept of pen pals has evolved to include email and online messaging. While the medium may have changed, the essence of pen pal relationships remains the same: forming connections, sharing stories, and building friendships across distances. However, many still prefer the traditional method of writing letters, finding it a more meaningful and personal way to communicate.

In conclusion, National Pen Pal Day is a celebration of friendship, communication, and cultural exchange. It reminds us of the value of taking the time to connect with others in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Whether you're an experienced letter writer or new to the practice, this day is a

perfect opportunity to embrace the joy of pen pals and celebrate the connections that bridge miles and bring people closer together.

Pen Pal Safety Tips for Kids

- 1. Always Get Permission:** Make sure to get your parents' or guardians' permission before signing up for a pen pal program. They should know who you are communicating with and the platform you are using.
- 2. Use Reputable Websites:** Choose well-known and reputable pen pal websites that have safety measures in place. Avoid using random forums or social media to find pen pals.
- 3. Protect Personal Information:** Never share personal information such as your full name, address, phone number, school name, or any other identifying details. Use your first name only or a nickname when corresponding.
- 4. Stay Anonymous:** Use a P.O. box address or have your letters sent to your school or another secure location instead of your home address.
- 5. Be Cautious with Photos:** Avoid sharing personal photos, especially those that might reveal your location or identity. If you want to share a picture, ask your parents or guardians for approval first.
- 6. Keep Conversations Appropriate:** Ensure that your conversations are friendly and appropriate. If a pen pal asks inappropriate questions or makes you feel uncomfortable, stop communicating with them and tell an adult immediately.
- 7. Involve a Trusted Adult:** Share your letters and emails with a trusted adult. They can help you understand any parts that seem confusing or concerning and ensure your safety.
- 8. Set Boundaries:** Be clear about what topics are okay to discuss and what are not. It's important to maintain boundaries in your conversations.

- 9. Report Suspicious Behavior:** If your pen pal asks for personal information, tries to meet you in person, or behaves in a way that makes you feel uneasy, inform a parent, teacher, or guardian right away.
- 10. Use Age-Appropriate Platforms:** Ensure that the pen pal program you are using is designed for kids your age. Some programs are specifically tailored to children and have extra safety measures in place.
- 11. Be Honest with Your Parents:** Always keep your parents or guardians informed about your pen pal activities. Share your letters with them and discuss any concerns you might have.
- 12. Stay Online:** If you are using an online pen pal service, keep your interactions on the platform rather than moving to other communication methods like texting or social media.

For Parents and Guardians

- 1. Monitor Activity:** Regularly monitor your child's pen pal interactions. Read letters and emails together and discuss any red flags or concerns.
- 2. Educate Your Child:** Teach your child about the importance of online safety and the dangers of sharing personal information with strangers.
- 3. Choose the Right Platform:** Help your child choose a reputable and safe pen pal program. Do some research to ensure the platform has good reviews and robust safety measures.
- 4. Set Guidelines:** Establish clear guidelines for your child's pen pal communication, including what information they can share and how often they can correspond.

5. Encourage Openness: Encourage your child to talk openly about their pen pal experiences. Make sure they feel comfortable coming to you with any concerns or questions.

Critical Thinking Questions: Pen Pal Safety Tips

Question 1

Why is it important to get parental permission before signing up for a pen pal program?

- A) To avoid having too many friends
- B) To ensure your parents know who you are communicating with and can help ensure your safety
- C) To get help with writing letters
- D) To have more fun

Question 2

Which of the following is the safest way to share your address with a pen pal?

- A) Sharing your home address directly
- B) Using a P.O. box address or having letters sent to your school
- C) Telling your pen pal to look it up online
- D) Sending your address in a separate email

Question 3

What should you do if your pen pal asks for your personal information, like your full name or phone number?

- A) Share it only if they seem nice
- B) Ignore the request and continue writing as usual
- C) Inform a parent, teacher, or guardian immediately
- D) Give them false information

Question 4

Why should you avoid sharing personal photos with your pen pal?

- A) Because it takes too much time
- B) Because it could reveal your location or identity
- C) Because it might get lost in the mail
- D) Because it's not necessary

Question 5

What is the best action to take if your pen pal makes you feel uncomfortable with their questions or comments?

- A) Stop communicating with them and tell an adult immediately
- B) Write back and ask them to stop
- C) Pretend you didn't read those parts of the letter
- D) Ignore the situation and continue writing

Question 6

Why is it important to keep your conversations with your pen pal appropriate and friendly?

- A) To make the letters longer
- B) To ensure a respectful and safe communication environment
- C) To impress your pen pal
- D) To avoid getting bored

Question 7

Which of the following is a good reason to share your pen pal letters with a trusted adult?

- A) To help with grammar and spelling
- B) To get them to write the letters for you
- C) To ensure the conversations are safe and appropriate
- D) To make the letters look more professional

Question 8

If your pen pal asks you to meet them in person, what should you do?

- A) Agree to meet if it's in a public place
- B) Ask them to come to your house

- C) Inform a parent, teacher, or guardian immediately
- D) Tell them you're too busy

Question 9

Which is the safest way to communicate with your pen pal?

- A) Through text messages and social media
- B) Using an online pen pal service with robust safety measures
- C) By calling them directly
- D) Sending letters through regular mail without parental supervision

Question 10

Why is it important to choose a pen pal program that is designed for kids your age?

- A) To find pen pals who live nearby
- B) To ensure the program has age-appropriate content and safety measures
- C) To get better stationery
- D) To make sure the letters are short

Reputable Website for Kids to Connect

Finding a safe and reputable website for kids to connect with pen pals is essential to ensure a positive and secure experience. Here are some well-regarded websites where children can find pen pals:

1. **Kids for Peace:** <https://kidsforpeaceglobal.org/peacefulpenpals/>
2. **Global Penfriends:** <https://www.globalpenfriends.com/>
3. **Lucas Letters:** <https://lucasletters.com/>

These websites provide a safe and structured environment for kids to find pen pals, learn about different cultures, and develop meaningful friendships. **Always ensure that parental supervision and guidance are in place when children are using online platforms to connect with others.**

ANSWERS: PEN PAL SAFETY TIPS

1. B

2. B

3. C

4. B

5. A

6. B

7. C

8. C

9. B

10. B

