

SwingLeft

COLLEGE

PROGRAMS

Virtual Letter Writing with Vote Forward

Swing Left is focused on helping you take impactful action to help flip ALL the houses this November, from wherever you are. Sending letters with Vote Forward is one of the easiest and most effective ways to increase voter turnout remotely.

The Swing Left College Programs and its volunteers have successfully hosted virtual letter writing parties this year that have resulted in thousands of letters! While we write letters over these next few months, your safety is our top priority. With that in mind, we encourage you to follow guidance from public officials and take action from home and/or online -- and this guide will help you do that!

Bring your friends and volunteers together in a digital space and get them excited about working on races up and down the ballot [in our 12 Super States](#). These states are key to winning 2020's most important fights: flipping the Senate, taking back the White House, and ending Republican gerrymandering. If you or your volunteers want to learn more, check out [Swing Left's 2020 Strategy](#).

Included in this Guide

- [Adopting Letters](#): How to set up an account with Vote Forward and adopt letters.
- [Postage Subsidy Program](#): How to apply for Vote Forward's postage subsidy program and have stamps sent to you, free of charge.
- [Letter Writing](#): How to correctly prepare and send Vote Forward letters.
- [Virtual Letter Writing Party Resources](#): Important links to help you send letters and host a virtual event.

Adopting Letters

- **Register on Vote Forward**
Go to <https://votefwd.org/swingleft> to sign up. You'll need to provide a bit of information about yourself (like your name and zip code) to verify your account.
- **Confirm your Vote Forward account**
Once you register, you'll get an email to confirm your account.

After that, you'll need to wait a day or two for approval as a volunteer. If you don't see the email, check your spam folder.

- **Request to apply for postage subsidy (free stamps!)**

To apply for Vote Forward's postage subsidy program, email stamps@votefwd.org with the subject line "College student - need stamps!" and ask to apply for the postage subsidy program in the body of your email.

You will receive a response from Vote Forward with a link to apply for the postage subsidy program. Complete this form to apply.

See the "Postage Subsidy Program" section of this guide for more information.

- **Log back into Vote Forward to adopt letters**

Log back in using the "Already Have an Account?" button. If you logged in initially with your Google or Facebook account, make sure you are using that same method of logging in.

- **Choose your campaign**

You may see a specific campaign when you log into Vote Forward. You can click "Switch campaign" to see other campaigns that are open.

- **Adopt your voters and download letters**

Remember that when you adopt letters, you are committing to preparing and sending them. No one else will be able to adopt the letters that you have, so they are your responsibility.

How many letters do you need? Based on our experience, you can assume the average letter writer can write 20 letters per hour.

- Calculate how many total letters you need with this simple equation: 20 letters per hour **X** approximate number of letter writers **X** number of hours of letter writing = total letters to download.
- Divide that number by 20 to find out how many times you need to click the "Adopt 20 more voters" button.

Click on the "Adopt 5 More Voters" or "Adopt 20 More Voters" to adopt 5 or 20 voters. You'll need to click that button multiple times to get more letters (i.e. if you click the "Adopt 20 more voters" twice, you'll get 40 letters).

Once you've adopted voters for your virtual party, you can download the letters in one PDF to print. Scroll down the page to see the PDF of all of your letters is located under the "Letters to Print and Prepare" column. Click the big blue button "Download and print these letters."

Since these will be virtual parties, each person will likely write 20-40 letters per virtual event, but volunteers can adopt as many letters as they'd like!

We generally advise volunteers to only adopt letters that they plan to write themselves. If you are hosting a virtual letter writing event you should instruct each attendee to sign up with Vote Forward in advance and adopt their own letters. This way they will receive instructions and important updates directly from Vote Forward, which is especially crucial this year given the uncertainty around our election administration. Additionally, if you adopt letters for someone

else you will still be held responsible for ensuring those letters are prepared correctly and sent.

NOTE: Please make sure you have a plan for keeping your letters safe until their send date. Most of the campaigns are Get Out the Vote (GOTV) letters for the general election on November 3rd and have a send date of late October.

- **Check out the “Letter Writing” section of this guide for help on preparing your letters**

Postage Subsidy Program

Vote Forward has a postage subsidy program to help offset the main cost of letter writing (i.e. buying stamps!) for eligible volunteers. Students involved in the Swing Left College Programs are encouraged to apply.

If this is your first time writing letters with Vote Forward, please start by following the instructions for adopting letters above.

If you have written letters in the past and want to apply for the postage subsidy program or want more details on this process, follow the steps below.

- **Apply for the postage subsidy program**
To apply for Vote Forward’s postage subsidy program, email stamps@votefwd.org with the subject line “College student - need stamps!” and ask to apply for the postage subsidy program in the body of your email.

You will receive a response from Vote Forward with a link to apply for the postage subsidy program. Complete this form to apply.

- **Wait for your stamps to arrive**
Stamps can take up to two weeks to arrive. However, this shouldn’t stop you from writing letters right away. Prepared letters can be stamped once you receive them.
- **Follow Vote Forward’s instructions before sending your letters**
You will receive an email from Vote Forward with a couple of quick steps to complete to verify that you have used your stamps. Please read those instructions carefully and complete the necessary steps BEFORE sending your letters.

Letter Writing

- **Print your downloaded letters**
Letters will print as one page each. It’s not necessary to print in color and Vote Forward doesn’t think it’s worth the extra printing costs. Make sure they are NOT double sided.

Voter names, addresses, and information about the UPS mailbox you’ll use as the return

address will be on a cover page, which is part of the same file (print this too).

NOTE: We know that not everyone has access to a printer, especially when you're not on campus. Here are some suggestions from [Vote Forward's COVID FAQ](#) about printing letters when you don't have a printer at home. If you're a fellow, follow the directions given by your manager.

- **Personalize the letters ([see diagrams](#))**

The recipient's address and the return address are at the bottom of each letter in small print. Use this information to ensure you are filling out the right letter and addressing it correctly.

- Handwrite:
 - The recipient's name (found in the footer).
 - Why you vote. Be sure not to mention candidates by name. The goal of these letters is to encourage low-propensity voters to cast a ballot.
 - Your signature (just your first name works).
- Unsure of what to write? Vote Forward says: "Heartfelt personal messages are best. Some people mention civic responsibility ("it's my duty as a citizen..."). Others talk about how hard-won the right to vote has been. It's fine to mention specific issues, just be careful not to assume the recipient agrees with your policy preferences.

- **Address, stamp, and seal ([see diagrams](#))**

The recipient's address and the return address are at the bottom of each letter in small print. Use this information to ensure that you put each letter in a correctly addressed envelope.

- Handwrite:
 - Your first name & the return address (a UPS mailbox that is rented by Vote Forward for this purpose).
 - The recipient's name and address.
- Place a stamp on the addressed envelope.

- **Mark your letters as "Prepared" in your dashboard**

On the Vote Forward website, click the green arrow on each completed letter so we know it's ready to go.

- **Set letters aside and keep safe until send date**

Find a safe place for all of your prepared letters. As the person adopting these letters, you are the one responsible for stockpiling letters and sending them on their send date. We suggest using this method to ensure that all letters are kept track of until the send date.

- **Send letters!**

The "send" date will be displayed on the campaign that you choose. You will also receive an email reminder from Vote Forward when it's time to send your letters.

If you participated in the postage subsidy program, be sure to follow Vote Forward's email instructions on how to verify that you used your stamps. This will include taking a photo of your letters BEFORE they are mailed and sending them to stamps@votefwd.org.

- **Mark your letters as “Mailed” in your dashboard**

On the Vote Forward website, click the green arrow on each sent letter so we know it's been delivered to your adopted voters.

Virtual Letter Writing Party Resources

- [Set up your virtual event in MobilizeAmerica here](#)
- [Instructions for turnout letters](#)
- [FAQs from Vote Forward](#)
- [How-To video from Vote Forward](#)
- [2020 Super States information](#)
- [Swing Left's Super State Strategy](#)