



Jane Austen loved writing letters. It was a way of keeping family and friends (and frenemies!) up to date – a bit like the social media of its day. Take a leaf out of Jane’s book(s) and write a letter of your own! Here’s some advice from Jane, writing in 1801: “express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth”.



If you’re unsure what to write about, take inspiration from Jane Austen’s House and use our handy prompts below to guide you. There’s also a letter template for you to use and fill in as you explore, if you’d like!



Most of Jane’s letters were written to her big sister and best friend, Cassandra. They often start ‘My dearest Cassandra’. Who are you writing your letter to? Your best friend? A family member? Someone you haven’t seen in a while?



Start outside, in the **garden**. What is the weather like? Is it sunny? Are there any funny-shaped clouds? Does it look like it might rain?



The **Drawing Room** is where Jane would have practiced her ‘accomplishments’, like sewing, reading, dancing and playing the piano. An ‘accomplishment’ is a fun skill or hobby, such as speaking another language, playing

an instrument, making art or being active. Are there any accomplishments you’ve been working on lately? What are you good at?



The **Dining Room** would have been a very lively place. Just like today, people would come together over meals. Martha Lloyd, who lived here with the Austens, kept a big book of her favourite recipes: toasted cheese, pound cake, cabbage pudding and curry all feature. What is your favourite food?



We think that Jane might have shared her **Bedroom** with her big sister Cassandra. They were best friends and did everything together. Jane is always very nice to her in her letters, often paying her compliments. She addressed a short story to her with this compliment: ‘Madam, you are a phoenix’. Pay a compliment to the person you are writing to. What do you like about them?



The **Family Room** looks at Jane's great big family – she had six brothers! She also had lots of nieces and nephews who she loved playing games with. She wrote a letter to her niece Cassy in a secret code – she wrote it entirely back to front, starting 'YM RAED YSSAC' (My Dear Cassy), and signing off 'ENAJ NETSUA' (Jane Austen). Can you write a sentence of backwards words?



Take a look around the **Brothers' Room**. Jane's brothers had some very interesting jobs, from sailing the high seas (Francis and Charles) to running their own banks (Henry). What would be your dream job? What adventures are you dreaming of?



Our most precious objects are in the **Treasures Cabinet**. The two beautiful topaz crosses belonged to Jane and Cassandra, gifts from their little brother Charles. What gift do you want the most?



At the end of the upstairs corridor is our **Legacy Area**. Look out of the window. What you're looking at was the main road in Jane Austen's day, a bit like a Georgian motorway. Jane loved travelling, especially going on trips to London and visiting friends. Can you write a line or two describing your trip to Jane Austen's House? What is your favourite thing that you've seen today, or have you learnt something interesting that you didn't know before? What might they like to know?



Now think about how you might like to end your letter – how do you want to say goodbye? Don't forget to put your name at the end, or else they won't know who the letter is from! Maybe you could sign your name backwards, like Jane did in her letter to Cassy.

How to fold your letter into its own envelope

Paper was really expensive in Jane Austen's time. Envelopes were not used, so letters would be folded up and sealed with wax. Here's how to fold your letter up – you might need an adult to help you, it is a bit fiddly!

- 1. Cut down the middle of the booklet, so your letter is a single sheet of paper with writing on one side.**
- 2. Turn it over, and fold along the dotted lines to make a small packet. (Fold inwards, so your writing is in the middle.) You should end up with a rectangular packet, with the address panel on one side.**
- 3. Then turn the packet over and if you can, tuck one side inside the other and stick them closed with a wax seal (or a piece of Sellotape!)**

Now your letter is ready for sending – just write the address on the back and pop on a stamp!





My dearest

The weather today is

I am getting very accomplished at

My favourite food is

You are

Crack the code (if you can!)

I am dreaming of

I really really want

Today I went to Jane Austen's House

Love from





Write the address here: