

a CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR ESL STUDENTS—SEND A POSTCARD!

Source/Inspiration	Topics	Grade Levels	Arrangements
America Learns (Sally Ianiro)	English Language Learners (Literacy) Vocabulary Development Writing	Adult Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced	One-on-One Small Group (2 to 5) Large Group (6 or more)

Materials & Resources:

- For each student, at least one new, glossy, postcard of a local attraction
- A stamp for each postcard
- One copy of **Drafting a Postcard** for each student
- A blackboard or whiteboard and chalk or markers

Situation:

An excellent writing activity for students is to have them draft, edit, copy, and send a postcard in one session. As the students leave the classroom, they drop their postcards in the mailbox and earn a sense of accomplishment.

Sending a postcard involves a surprising amount of literacy skills. Students have to write sentences, salutations, closings, dates, and addresses. Be prepared to scaffold (assist) those students who don't have all these skills just yet.

Step 1:

A few days before you present this lesson, ask students to bring in the address of a friend or relative in another city.

Check the addresses as students bring them in. Be sure that each address is complete and legible and that there is a zip code.

Step 2:

Create interest in the lesson by showing students all the beautiful, glossy post cards of your city that you've brought for them today.

Ask students, "Do you ever send postcards? Have you received postcards? Why do people send them? What kinds of things do people say in postcards? What's the difference between a postcard and a letter? Which is more casual? Why don't you say the same things on postcard that you would write in a letter?"

Step 3:

On the board, draw a giant postcard like the drawing on the Drafting a Postcard worksheet. Demonstrate how to write a postcard.

On the board, fill in the date, the salutation, the message, the closing, and the address. Ask students to help you compose the message, and ask them questions as you complete the form. For example, say, "What do I put on the first line of the address? [The person's name, right.] And the second line? What will I write here? [The house number and street, yes.] Is it OK to abbreviate the word **street**? [Yes, it certainly is]."

Step 4:

Direct students to fill out a draft of their postcard using the Drafting a Postcard worksheet.

There are two postcard forms for students to use on each worksheet, but they only need to complete one. Advanced students may be able to write two postcards in one session.

Step 5:

Check students' drafts for correct form and punctuation. When students' drafts are corrected, tell them to copy the writing onto the postcard.

Many students have had bad experiences with teachers correcting their writing, so be sure not to use a red pen or to fill the page with corrections. If the student spells a word incorrectly, don't cross it out and correct it. Instead, write the word at the bottom of the worksheet, where the student can refer to it to correct his spelling.

If there are excessive errors, don't aim for perfection. Aim for making the postcard readable and for conveying the students' sentiments to the person who will be receiving the card.

Once you and the student are happy with the draft, have the student transfer it in pen to the postcard and affix the postage.

Step 6:

As the students leave the classroom, have them drop their postcards in the nearest mailbox.

This may be the first postcard your students have ever sent! If they enjoy the activity, make it a frequent event. You should see progress in their writing.