

• **WIRE OF HOPE PRISON PEN PAL PROGRAM** •  
**BECOME A VOLUNTEER!**



**What are the requirements to become a penpal?** 🚫

Must be 18 years of age or older and agree to our [terms of service](#).

**Why should I become a penpal to someone in prison?**

- To have a meaningful impact on their rehabilitation process.
- To support second chances & new beginnings.
- To help lower recidivism in today's society.
- To take a stand for criminal justice & prison reform.
- To make a new friend and broaden your horizons.



**What's the role of a volunteer penpal?**

Your role is to offer companionship, build a connection and encourage your penpal throughout their rehabilitative journey. Get to know them, be their window to the world and offer your emotional support when necessary. Allow them to reciprocate and feel valued as a person and a friend.



**Be mindful of the commitment.**

Always remember that you could become your penpal's main connection to the outside world and/or exclusive emotional support. Depending on the time your penpal has left to serve in prison, you could be committing to a long-term prison correspondence. If you are willing to write someone with a life sentence or on death row, you could also engage in a very emotionally-charged penpalship.

**Safety first!**

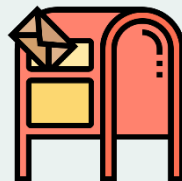
Make sure to read our [precautionary measures](#) before engaging in a prison correspondence. Remember to always follow your gut, be aware of potential red flags, and set clear boundaries with your prison penpal from the start. If at any time you feel uncomfortable in your penpalship, communicate about it. And if it seems that communication or transparency is not the right way to go, feel free to remove yourself from the correspondence or to [reach out to us](#) or our [online community](#) for advice.

**I'd rather not share my personal address.**

Always go with whatever makes you feel the most comfortable. If you do not feel like sharing your personal address, you can subscribe to a P.O. Box with your post office or ask your local church if they would allow you to use their address for your prison correspondence. If these options do not work for you, you can always use a virtual P.O. Box service like [Jmail](#).

**I'm in! How does it work? Where do I start?**

- [1] Read our [FAQ](#) and the many resources available on our website, including our [tips for beginning a prison correspondence](#) and our [precautionary measures](#).
- [2] Browse our [prison penpal listings](#) and/or use our [search engine](#) to find the person you would like to start a correspondence with.
- [3] Send them a letter to the address provided in the contact information tab of their profile and/or an electronic message with their prison email system.
- [4] Wait for your new prison penpal to reply to you!



**Are there any mail rules to follow?**

Yes! In fact, there are plenty, and to ensure that your letter will reach its destination, find out about the main ones [here](#). Also keep in mind that your correspondence will likely be read and monitored by correctional staff.

**What about emails?**

Emails are available in most prisons and jails. Find out more about it [here](#).

**How can I locate my prison penpal? What if they have been moved?**

Wire of Hope's members' contact information is kept up-to-date as much as possible, but just in case, tools are available online to confirm the location & address of people detained in the United States. Find out more about those [here](#).



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**What should I be talking about in my letters to my penpal?**

Any topic you feel comfortable chatting about: go for it! Sharing through letters can help create deeper bonds but be mindful that your penpal is as much a stranger at the beginning of your correspondence as anyone you would meet on the streets. Take your time, have small talks, get to know each other, build trust, give and receive support, let the penpalship grow organically. And if you're still wondering what to write in your first letter, simply introduce yourself, where you come from, talk about your hobbies, what you do for a living, etc. Breaking the ice can be challenging at first, but the conversation will get easier with time. More tips [here](#).



**Should I send a picture of myself?**

It's only fair for your penpal to want to put a face to their new penpal's name, but pick your picture wisely! A seductive picture, for example, could be sending the wrong message.


**Should I look up their crime(s)?**

It's 100% up to you! All our profiles include a sentence information tab with the member's conviction(s)- verified by our team to the best of our abilities. You are welcome to take a look, and if you would like to obtain additional information, feel free to investigate further through other channels, such as the relevant criminal court.

**Can I ask or talk about their crime(s) with my penpal?**

Just like you would not address personal matters with someone you barely know, be patient and wait to create a trusting environment between you and your penpal before addressing their crime(s) or anything you deem too personal on their end or on yours. Trust goes both ways.

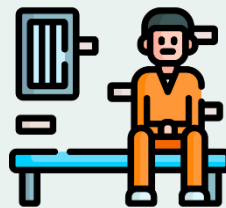


**Be aware of potential red flags!** 

A prison penpal who repeatedly crosses the boundaries you have set, who asks for money or hints at it, who makes requests like sending money on their behalf, passing messages or reaching out to their victims or co-defendants... are red flags that we ask you to please be mindful about. Feel free to always [reach out to us](#) with your questions or join our [online community](#) for advice.

**Is your penpal going through difficult times?**

Incarceration can cause lasting damage to mental health, and the awful conditions common in prisons and jails, such as overcrowding, solitary confinement, exposure to violence, etc. can lead to even more negative effects. On the other end, studies show that people with social support and positive family and/or friendly relationships tend to have better psychological wellbeing, which is why your role as a penpal can be particularly crucial in the life of someone incarcerated. Knowing they have someone they can turn to in stressful or tough times can make a real difference in their lives. Just lending an ear, showing true concern, and sympathizing with what they are going through can help lift their spirits. It can also lead to positive repercussions on their rehabilitation process.



**What to do if my penpal keeps crossing my boundaries.**

If your penpal has crossed a line you clearly defined with them, it is important to remember that some incarcerated people have spent years in prison and may have difficulties interacting and following social norms. Be open with them and speak up about how you feel, but remember that the decision to give them a second chance or end the penpalship is 100% your call.

**More Questions? Feel free to [contact us](#) or [join our online community](#) about prison correspondence!**

*Wire of Hope Prison Pen Pal Program could not exist without its volunteers! Thank you for participating!*

