

Special Olympics Iowa Pen Pal Program

Take a break from the computer, but stay connected with your friends! The Special Olympics Iowa Pen Pal Program is bringing people together from across the state. The program is for athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and fans.

Register Now

Participants are encouraged to share some fun information about themselves, like what sports they participate in and other activities. Pen pals will exchange letters starting in December and can even continue writing letters throughout the year after the official program is wrapped up.

Pen pals will come from all across the state, so athletes with all different writing abilities can join. Each correspondence can be unique and can step outside a traditional letter format. Pictures, collages, and a little parent assistance are all okay, as long as participants are taking the opportunity to connect. We recommend that participants start by corresponding with handwritten letters; however, feel free to connect virtually from time to time if you and your pen pal agree to do so.

Here's How It Works

Step 1 (November 2-December 4): [Sign up](#).

Step 2 (December 9): Special Olympics Iowa will email you information about your pen pal.

Step 3 (December 17): Program launches! (Kit will be mailed to you.)

Step 4 (December 21-March 5): Send at least 3 letters to your pen pal.

Step 5 (February 4-5): Tell us your feedback on this new program! Stay tuned for details about a celebration and feedback form!

Pen Pal Letter Ideas

- Tell them about your hobbies
- States and countries that you've visited
- Things that you do every day
- Things that make you happy
- Your favorite TV show, movies, food, games, music, books etc.



- Sports you play (or played)
- Unusual facts about you
- What you do for work
- Your favorite memory of Special Olympics Iowa
- Your favorite toy, as a child
- What fictional character you would like to meet

Things You Can Include in Your Letters

- Origami
- Washi tape
- Cute post it notes
- Packet of seeds
- Stickers
- Colorful paper clips
- Homemade art
- Recipe
- Friendship bracelet
- Bookmark
- Photographs
- Bracelets
- Ribbon
- Crosswords or other puzzles
- Pressed flowers
- Poems

Envelope

Now that you've put together the letter and maybe some other fun things, you need some creative envelope art! Decorate the envelope however you would like, just leave room on the front. It is also important to address the envelope to your pen pal correctly, or your letter may get lost in the mail. Follow the guidelines below and then ask your parents or coach to check your envelope.

Sender's Name Street Address City, State Zip Code	Stamp
Recipient's Full Name Street Address City, State Zip Code	

Pen Pal FAQs

What is the Pen Pal Program? The Pen Pal Program is intended to be a fun way to connect with others through handwritten letters.

Who can participate in the Pen Pal Program? All athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and fans are encouraged to participate.

How will I be matched with a pen pal? Based on the information you provide when you register, SOIA will do its best to match each participant with someone who has similar interests and hobbies. Once a match has been made, both pen pals will be notified via email.

Can I send other things to my pen pal along with a letter? Yes, but that is up to you. (Example: drawings, photos, stickers, birthday cards, etc.)

Should we write or type our letters? If you or your pen pal have difficulty reading each other's letters, you can type your letters on a computer.

I am moving. Who needs to know? Please contact [Dawn Criss](#) to give her your new address.

Will I ever meet my pen pal? You can expect to receive an invitation to a Virtual Pen Pal Celebration next spring. This will be a fun event where you will be able to meet your pen pal and talk with other pen pals from across the state.

How long will the Pen Pal Program last? While participation in the program is at-will, we suggest that participants commit to the program for a minimum of six months to allow the pen pal relationship time to develop.

Who pays for postage? You are responsible for the cost of required postage for mailing your letters.

When can I expect my first letter? We ask that all participants try their best to write their pen pals within two weeks of receiving their initial pen pal match email and any letters they receive from their pen pal.

What should I do if it has been over three weeks and I haven't received a letter?

Please notify SOIA and we will contact your pen pal.

Please contact Dawn Criss, dcriss@soiowa.org, with any questions or program feedback. We want to ensure that all participants have a positive experience!