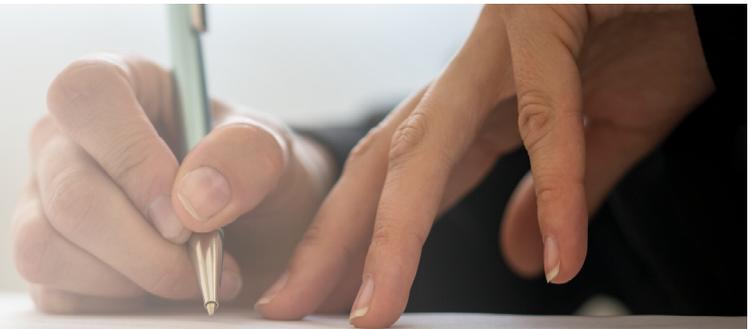




Friends  
THROUGH  
Pens



## The Order of Malta — Friends Through Pens Program Guidelines

*Please Note: If you are a volunteer for the Department of Corrections, you cannot participate in this program*

**The goal of writing to a person in prison is to promote the exchange of friendly letters and not to provide financial assistance or romantic involvement.**

**Pen pals help inmates stay aware of the world outside of prison, particularly the area where they resided.**

**Through your letters, show compassion, caring, understanding and help improve the inmate's self-esteem. Remember that your pen pal may be very vulnerable, and life may seem relatively hopeless. Being free and how to attain freedom may be a primary thought of your pen pal. This can lead to manipulation.**

**An inmate's mood may change daily. Life in prison is a complex system that those of us on the "outside" have no way of understanding. Pen pals commit to writing at least one letter per month for at least one year.**

Begin by telling general things about yourself and things that mean something to you. Most inmates enjoy hearing about our daily lives. It helps them stay in touch with the world on the "outside," and serves as a diversion from the grind of prison life.

Topics may include discussion about an area of interest to them, a sport or team that he or she may follow, conversation about something they have read, an outlet for spiritual thoughts/questions, or whatever is on their mind or in their heart.

Encourage inmates to use their time in prison to grow spiritually, educate themselves or improve their writing skills.

Pray for your inmate and tell them that you are doing so. Ask others to pray for your inmate and tell them others are praying for them.

**Ask them to pray for you and for those you pray for. It is important that you give them something they can do for you too.**

## DO'S

Using plain stationery or Order of Malta letterhead, send your letters directly to your inmate, making sure to include their Inmate ID# on the letter as well as on the envelope. For a return address, use only the first name or nickname that you have made up and the Order of Malta's Pen Pal address — **PO Box 22263, St Paul, MN 55122.**

Keep letters one to two pages long.

Write once a month for six months, regardless of whether you get a reply. If after six months you have not received a reply, you may send a final closure letter and inform your Pen Pal Coordinator.

Set a positive tone. State the purpose of your writing so that the inmate can respond accordingly. Establish clear boundaries so the inmate understands that your relationship is platonic, and **only** for the time they are in prison.

Accept your inmate as a fellow human being whom you want to get to know.

## DON'TS

Never offer personal information about your family. Never provide your full last name, address or telephone number. Never provide the names of your friends. Do not provide your workplace information. Use your first name only or a nickname.

Do not promise something that you cannot deliver.

**Do not send money or gifts. This includes stamps and stationery.**

Do not send pictures of yourself or things that reveal personal information.

Do not continue to write if you receive inappropriate messages. **Contact your Pen Pal Coordinator if this happens.**

Do not say anything in your letters that might be embarrassing if it were revealed. All mail is potentially read by prison staff before it is forwarded to your inmate.

Do not contact the inmate's family, friends, attorney or parole officer.

Do not give legal advice, even if you are a lawyer.

**I have read The Order of Malta Pen Pal Program Guidelines, and I agree to comply with them.  
I will also comply with any additional rules and regulations that may be imposed by the  
correctional facility where my letters may be sent.**

---

PRINT FIRST & LAST NAME

---

NAME YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE WITH YOUR PEN PAL

---

PHONE NUMBER

---

STREET ADDRESS

---

CITY / STATE / ZIP

---

E-MAIL ADDRESS

---

**LIST YOUR INTERESTS TO HELP US FIND A GOOD MATCH FOR YOU**

Football Basketball Hockey Baseball Soccer Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Teams: \_\_\_\_\_

Hunting Fishing Camping Travel Cars Racing Running/Fitness World Events

Nature Cooking/Baking Woodworking Crafts: \_\_\_\_\_ Bible Study

Faith Books Meditation Family Friendships Music Movies Books

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

SIGNATURE

---

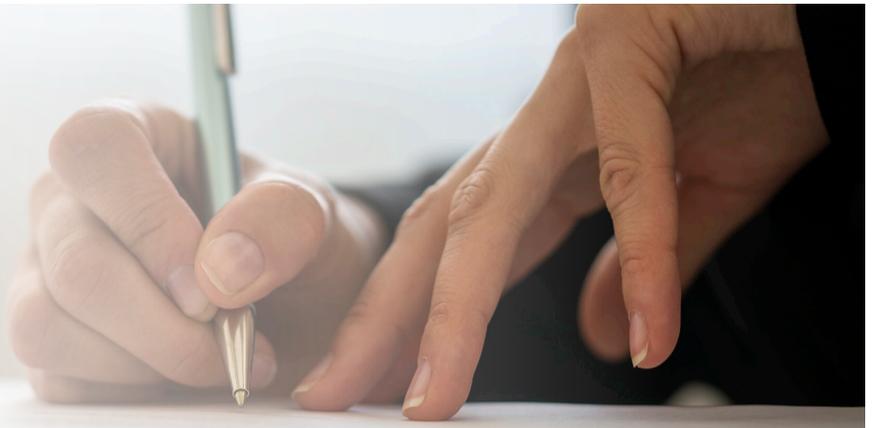
DATE

**Please forward this form to the OM Pen Pal Coordinator by either: Email: [tcpm.penpal@gmail.com](mailto:tcpm.penpal@gmail.com)  
or USPS Mail: Order of Malta Pen Pal Program, PO Box 22263, St. Paul, MN 55122  
Once received, we will contact you with your new Pen Pal information.**



PO Box 22263, St Paul, MN 55122

# Friends THROUGH Pens



## - Pen Pal Mailing Process -

1. Use a pen name or your first name. **(Do not include your last name)**
2. Use the Order of Malta (OM) letterhead paper or use the OM PO Box as your return address. **(Do not include your personal address)**
3. Put the Inmate's name, ID # and facility address on the envelope's center.
4. The inmate will send his reply to the OM PO Box
5. This will be forwarded to your personal address.

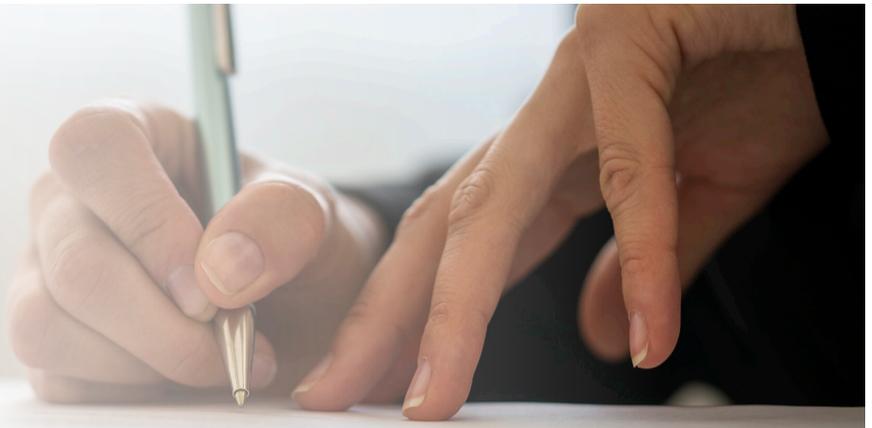
### Sample Envelope:

SMOM Pen Pal Program  
(Your first name)  
PO Box 22263  
St Paul, MN 55122

Inmate name & ID #  
Inmate's Facility Address



# Friends THROUGH Pens



## - 8 Ways to Improve your Pen Pal Writing -

1. **Write your letters by hand.** Legible, handwritten letters are more personable for your pal, compared to typed letters.
2. **Include a pet photo.** Many pen pals love getting photos of pets. Pets are nonjudgmental and connect inmates with the outside world.
3. **Ask them questions.** Questions like: “What is the best job you ever had? What is your family like? Tell me about your best childhood friend. What is your favorite movie?”
4. **Include a prayer card.** A beautiful prayer can mean a lot to those who need encouragement. It’s even better if the card has nice artwork (see our Rosary prayer cards.) Just make sure the card is not laminated.
5. **Make your letters positive.** Themes of encouragement and growth are more effective than themes of forgiveness or judgment.
6. **Send post cards.** Send your pal post cards if you go somewhere interesting. They love getting cards from distant locations with interesting stamps. It’s another way for pals to connect to the outside world.
7. **Send birthday cards, Christmas cards, Easter cards, etc.** These are more than just cards; they accompany rituals that mark being part of a larger community. Most facilities do not accept cards with glitter or other effects, so keep it simple.
8. **Keep the letters frequent and short.** Don’t wait for a reply before you send your next letter. It’s fun to get letters from your pal, but your letters still have impact, even if your pal doesn’t reply. Try to write at least once a month. It’s not very hard if you include birthday cards, Christmas cards, post cards, etc.





**ORDER OF MALTA**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

Dear...,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Friends Through Pens program. I am looking forward to getting to know you in the days ahead.

This is a new experience for me. I have been provided with guidelines concerning my participation. I am forbidden from contacting your friends or family, your attorney, or your parole officer. Also, I am not permitted to provide money or gifts. I understand that these guidelines have also been made known to you.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I am in my 50's, have been married for many years, and have two grown children. I enjoy running. I like reading and usually read biographies, or books about history. I enjoy quotations, clever turns of phrases, and expressions of great truths in simple words.

I have been in a men's Bible Study group for more than 20 years. In many ways I still feel like a beginner. I guess that means there is room for me to grow. I learn more from the observations of others than from my own study. Still, I like to ponder and reflect.

I know very little about life in prison. I hope you will feel free to share with me what your daily life is like, and the things that interest or concern you.

In recent years, I have come to believe that there is great power in praying for each other. I know I will ask you to pray for me, and to pray for those who are in my prayers. I will pray for you, and for those for whom you would like me to pray.

May God Bless you and keep you safe,



**ORDER OF MALTA**  
American Association