

# How to Write a Letter to Someone Who is Incarcerated



**Disclaimer:** Although this is a comprehensive guide on how to write a letter to an incarcerated loved one, rules and regulations still vary from facility to facility. So, to get the clearest and best information, check the website that your loved one is located to ensure that you receive the most accurate information for contacting them.

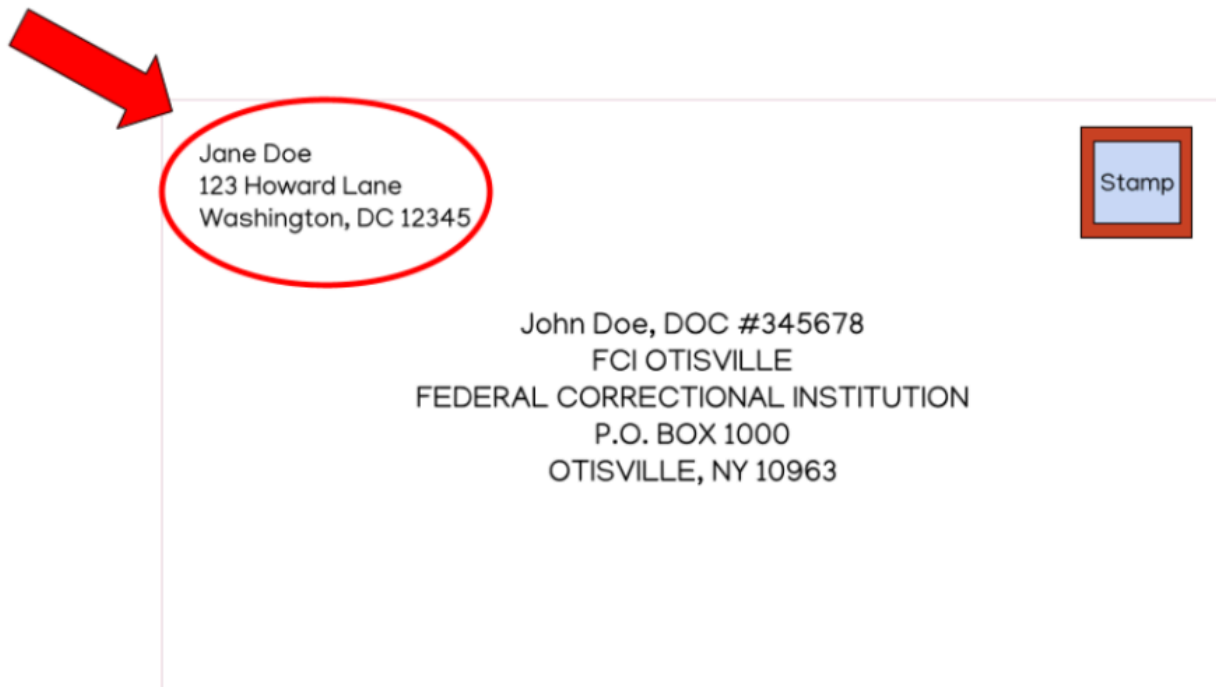
## Addressing an Envelope

Starting in the upper lefthand corner, write your name and address, in case your letter gets sent back for some reason. Starting at the top, write your full name. Underneath your name, write your address. Finally, below your street address, write your city, state/territory and zip code. This should look something like this:

**Full Name**

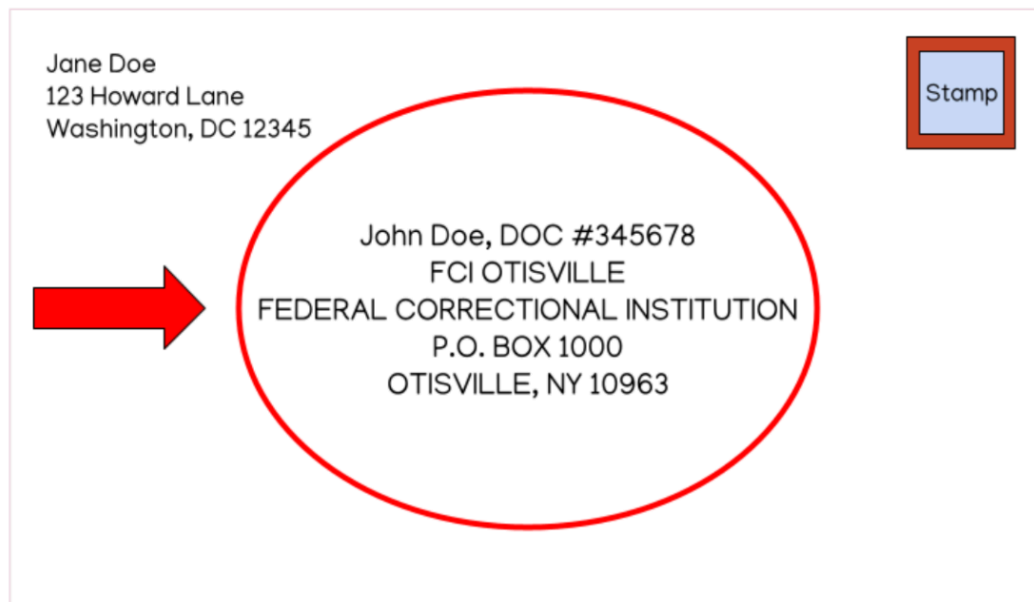
**Street Address**

**City, State/Territory, Zip Code**



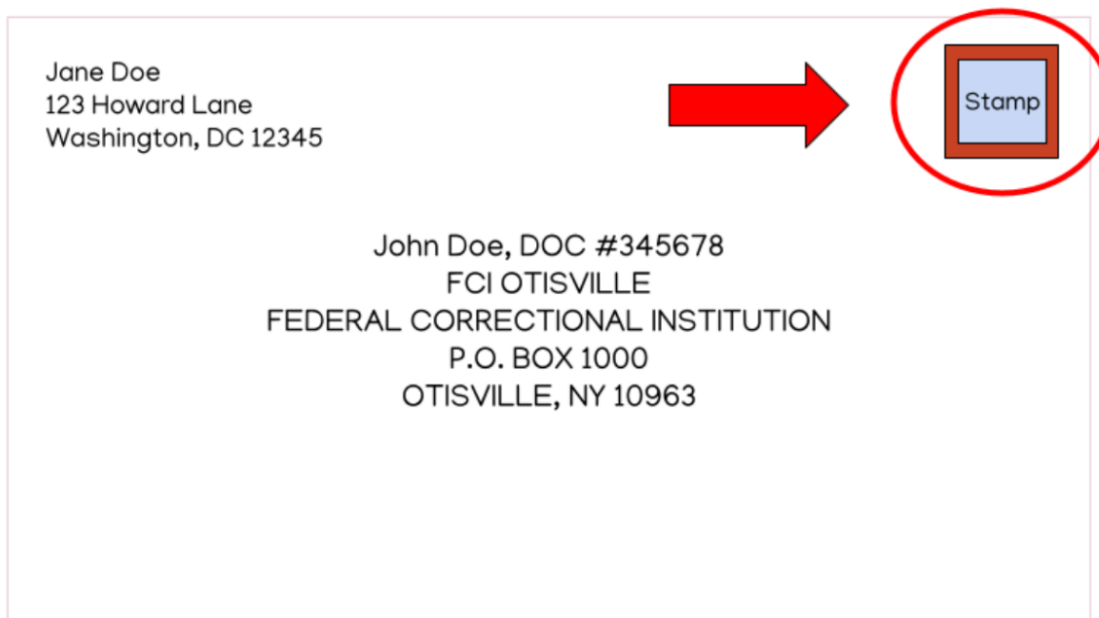
In the center of the envelope, you will need to put your loved one's address. To do this, you will need their "inmate number". If one of your family members does not know what your incarcerated relative's number is, you can look up the facility that they are being held in and find the number assigned to them. On that website, you should also be able to find the address of the facility they are currently living\*. Underneath the name and inmate number, write the name of the facility where your relative is currently incarcerated. Below that, write the physical address of the facility, or the P.O. box where the facility accepts inmate mail. Below the street or P.O. address, write the city, state/territory, and the zip code of the jail, prison, or P.O. box. This should look something like this:

**Full Name, Inmate Number**  
**Facility Name**  
**Street Address/P.O. Box**  
**City, State/Territory, Zip Code**



\*If you are unable to access the internet at home or at school, most public libraries freely provide access to computers and internet.

Finally, you can add a stamp on the upper right corner. If you do not have stamps on hand, they can be purchased at the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and many grocery stores and pharmacies.



After putting your letter inside, you can seal the envelope and drop it off at your local mailbox, (which should look something like this)!



Congratulations on sending your letter! If all goes properly, depending on how far your loved one is, they should receive your letter in approximately 1-3 weeks! Now we know how to address an envelope, let's figure out what to put inside.

# What to Write About

Sometimes when writing to someone or contacting someone you haven't spoken to in a bit of time, it can be hard to think of what to say. Here's some writing prompts to help with writer's block.

- How are you feeling?
- Describe the best day of your life.
- What is your biggest challenge at the moment?
- What are you doing to keep busy?
- What are you watching or reading? Describe it. How are you enjoying it?
- What is happening in the world that is interesting to you? (Sports, the news...?)
- How is school going? What are your favorite and least favorite classes and why?
- What is something you're looking forward to in the future?

# What you Can and Can't Put Inside your Envelope

Correctional facilities are often strict about what you can send to people who are incarcerated there. Here are some basic rules to make sure your loved one gets your letter.

- **Use black ink on white paper**
- **Things you CAN put inside envelopes**
  - Photos (no polaroids)
  - Cutouts of newspapers/articles (varies by state and the content of the article)
- **Things you CANNOT put inside envelopes**
  - Stamps
  - Anything scented
  - Stickers (varies by state)
  - Glitter
  - Cash
  - Food

