

PARENT ADVOCACY TOOL 1

Which Letter Should I Use?

A quick guide to choosing the right written school contact.

The short answer: Begin with the First Contact Letter unless there is immediate danger or you have already completed that step without an adequate response.

Use the First Contact Letter when:

1. You are reporting the situation to the principal or school administrator for the first time in writing.
2. You have spoken with school staff, but no clear written report or response timeline exists yet.
3. You want to establish a cooperative tone while requesting specific safety measures and follow-up.

Use the Formal Escalation Letter when:

4. You already reported the problem and the response has been delayed, unclear, incomplete, or ineffective.
5. The behavior has continued, worsened, or been followed by retaliation.
6. Promised actions did not occur, or your child remains unsafe or unable to participate fully in school.
7. You need a formal written review by district-level leadership or the next authority named in school policy.

The four-step path

8. Document the facts. Record dates, locations, exact words or actions when known, witnesses, impact on your child, and any evidence preserved.
9. Send the First Contact Letter. Ask for acknowledgment, immediate protection, a point person, a response timeline, and a written safety plan.
10. Keep the School Contact Record. Log every call, email, meeting, commitment, deadline, and result.
11. Escalate when necessary. If the response is delayed or ineffective—or the conduct continues—send the Formal Escalation Letter to the next appropriate authority.

Do not wait for a letter when safety is urgent

Urgent safety: If there is an immediate threat, weapon, physical or sexual violence, stalking, danger at home, or concern about self-harm, seek immediate help through appropriate emergency services, school safety personnel, crisis services, or law enforcement. A template is not a crisis-response plan.

Three principles for every message

12. Describe observable facts rather than assigning motives or labels.
13. Explain the effect on your child's safety, well-being, attendance, learning, or access to school.
14. Ask for specific actions and dates. "Please help" is heartfelt; "Please confirm the safety plan and point person by [date]" is actionable.

A note about privacy and process

The school may be unable to share confidential information about another student. You can still ask what protective steps will be taken for your child, how the school will monitor the situation, whom your child should contact, and when the plan will be reviewed.

These templates are educational tools, not legal advice. School policies and legal requirements vary by setting and jurisdiction. Adapt the language to the facts and consult a qualified advocate or attorney when legal guidance is needed.