

## Mailing Tips

While e-mail is a wonderful innovation in keeping connected to a deployed family member, there is nothing better than holding a tangible reminder of home in your hand. Here are some basic tips for writing your deployed Sailor.

### Letter Mail

1. Mail is slow. First class mail will average 10 days to the ship and may take up to 20 days. Plan ahead for special dates and mail early for birthdays, anniversaries and holidays.
2. Write often. Letters do not have to be long, but writing often is important. If that is difficult supplement with greeting cards. Getting short letters often is better than getting long letters occasionally.
3. Number letters. The roundabout means by which mail reaches the DET means and the fact that it arrives in bulk means that letters may be received at once or out of sequence. Numbering envelopes and dating letters is very important.
4. Keep things upbeat. By all means, let your loved one know about problems at home, but don't send a letter full of complaints and gripes. Explain any problems clearly and concisely, and include how you intend to resolve the situation. Interject all letters with amusing stories of your family's daily activities.
5. Include pictures.
6. Write self-contained letters. Don't close letters without resolving issues. Never promise to finish a story or provide resolution 'with the next letter' because you don't know how long it will take that letter to find your loved one.
7. Vary your routine. Try not to send just letters, or just greeting cards. Mix things up a bit. Send a few letters, then a card or two, and so on. While it may seem a minor point, to a deployed Marine or Sailor, it makes a world of difference for them to know you're putting thought into your correspondence.
8. Never write in anger. There may be times when frustration and tension build up and the best way to release it is in a letter. However, before you send out that 'flamer,' let it sit for a day or so. Give yourself time to cool down and think things over, and after a while, things might not be so bad after all. If you do feel the need to vent, do so calmly, telling your loved one how you feel and why.
9. Say what they want to hear. I love you! I miss you!

### Packages

1. Remember, packages will be handled by a lot of people and may get crushed, so pack carefully. Use a thick, sturdy box. A shoebox just won't do.
2. Make sure the box isn't too big for the item(s) included. Stuff the box with crumpled newspaper so things inside won't rattle around and will have a little more cushion.
3. Tape all corners and open creases securely. The Post Office won't accept scotch or masking tape because they don't hold well. Instead, use duct, nylon reinforced or paper tape.
4. Don't send fragile items.
5. Make sure food items won't spoil or melt. There's nothing worse than getting a big lump of inedible chocolate. Fruit-based snacks, hard candies, and trail mixes are great ideas. If your Marine or Sailor has to have chocolate, send Tootsie Rolls.
6. Although they may be a bit out of date, send magazines and local newspapers so your loved one will have an idea of what's going on back at home.