

# DRAFTING A FIRST CONTACT



Regardless of how you initiate contact with prospective partners, there are some fundamental ideas to consider. Whether it's a letter, email, call, or meeting, this may be your first formal impression, so make it count!

## Be Personal

Address your communication to a **specific individual**, not “to whom it may concern.” Similarly, “May I speak to your Director of Marketing or Public Relations?” gives the impression that it’s a random sales pitch. A better choice would be a view of the website contacts or quick call asking for the correct name of the person so you can send them information. Sign your letter personally. **This sends a message of extra care and dedication.**

## Use Plain Language

Avoid using too many technical words or jargon associated with your specific field. Aim for **clear and concise**, yet not condescending.

## Show Your Passion

Show the **genuine belief you have for your mission**. Communicate honestly about the work of your organization and how it impacts the community. Illustrate the devotion of your employees and their work. Donors want to know that in addition to helping the community through direct service, they are also supporting a valuable employer in their area. Be creative in your descriptions, avoiding clichés.

## Show Your Passion

Concisely share the who, what, when, where, how, and why of your agency without overwhelming the audience with paragraphs of detail. It will take some crafting and re-working, but **a well-designed script containing all the key points will be worth the effort**. This is where a solid foundation of knowledge about your organization is vital (See [Organizing the Basics](#)).

## Make Community Connections

You might include a small quote from an employee or client that indicates how the services have positively impacted your community.

## Stay Positive

**Focus on good your organization does in your community** and how this positively impacts your audience.

## Highlight the Benefits

Indicate that you are looking for an **ongoing connection**. Remind the audience that a gift to your organization has benefits to the donor as well.

## Proofread

Before sending a written document, have more than one person with different levels of editing skill carefully proofread the document.

## Practice

Be sure to practice your talking points ahead of time. **Speak from the heart, not your notes**. Try not to recite from a page, yet be prepared to answer possible questions.

## Provide Options

**Have options available for donors** to choose their preferred method of contributing. Specific dollar amounts or a list of needed items will help those who are unsure or leaning toward a “no” feel like they can choose something off the list. A stamped reply card or an easy link to click will increase the chance that someone will respond. It’s easier to give when it’s convenient!

## Follow Up

Make sure to follow up after an initial contact – either with a different method or a meeting that was set up at first contact. **Don’t be afraid to call again or send a new message**. Strike a balance between persistence and annoyance. Be respectful if someone asks to be taken off of your list.