

Sample One

Dear XXX,

There are so many children who write to me that I cannot answer them all. But I'm writing to you, dear XXX, because you've worked so very hard to be good this year!

How hard you've tried to obey your parents and do your homework before playing video games or watching TV! You listen more carefully to instructions better than you did last year, too, and you should be very proud of that. But what really got your name on this year's list of children I must write back to, XXX, is how much better you've gotten at being kind to others and how much your heart has grown this year.

When you stopped XYZ from bullying ABC, your big heart made a light so bright that I could see it all the way at my North Pole workshop, even without my special viewscreen! And then, when you knew that your friend DEF was being left out from plans for a party and you made sure that she was included and that she had a good time, well, XXX, I smiled so hard my pudgy old cheeks hurt. You have a lot to be proud of this year!

Now, while I'm very proud of all you've accomplished this year—that was a great game against MNO Elementary, by the way—next year, you're going to be a year older, and that means we're all going to expect a little more of you. Maybe you could try harder to get to bed on time every night, including weekends. That would make your parents very happy, and it might even get you back on the "Write Back" list again next year!

I also want you to know that even though your house does not have a chimney, I can get into any home where a child lives. I cannot tell you my secrets, but don't worry; I'll make it into your home in my own special way. After all, the elves have been working extra hard this year, trying to make sure that we finish all the toys before Christmas Eve, and Rudolph and the other reindeer have had flight practice every day since Thanksgiving. We can't have all their hard work and preparation go to waste! At this time of year, even Mrs. Claus complains she's tired, but even though we complain, it's our favorite time of the year. Indeed, we all find this time of year just as exciting as you do!

Speaking of Mrs. Claus, she's been making me peppermint cookies and hot chocolate until I can't swallow any more. Would you please do me a favor, XXX? I'd like a change of treat. On Christmas Eve, would you please leave some of your grandma's delicious *cuccidati* and some milk out for me, along with some carrots for the reindeer? We have a lot of work to do in one night, and just like you, we get extra hungry when we're out in the cold!

Well, I have to run now; I have a lot to do before Christmas Eve. But I have your list in front of me now, XXX, and I think you're going to be pretty happy come Christmas morning! Keep up the good work!

Merry Christmas to you and your family,

Santa Claus

Sample Two

Dear XXX,

Merry Christmas! I just had to write to you because my list-keeper elf, Corym, tells me that you have been extra-specially good this year. Corym is the best list-keeper elf I've ever known, so if she says you've been extra-specially good this year, then you've been extra-specially good this year. You've been so extra-specially good that this Christmas Eve, I'll be dropping off extra-specially nice surprise for you at your house on Schooner Avenue in Henderson, Nevada!

I also see here on my list that you volunteered to pass out water at the Race for Andy your school held to help your friend who has cancer. Not many people your age would have chosen to give out water at a school event rather than go with their brothers to see the opening of the new Star Wars movie, but you did. Golly, but your generosity showed there. You should be proud of that generous spirit, XXX!

You know, XXX, you remind me of a boy in Italy who's also seven. His name is Antonio. Just like you, Antonio is on the "Nice" list this year, and just like you, he has a friend who has cancer. Just like you, Antonio finds it difficult to obey all the rules adults expect him to follow. In fact, also just like you, Antonio really hates his parents' rule against chewing gum. But Antonio has promised to concentrate on obeying that rule during the coming year, and I hope you'll make the same promise. If you are willing to try, say, "I'm willing," right now. I'll hear you!

XXX, I don't want to forget to mention that I know how hard you've been trying to be patient with your younger brother AAA. Even though you did have that fight with him on Halloween, it's the only really big fight you two had this year, and that's a *huge* improvement over last year! Maybe when Christmas 2018 rolls around, you'll be able to say that you did not have a single fight with your brother all year. Do you think you can do that? I think you can because I see that you work hard and try to consider other people's feelings before speaking.

Well, I'd love to keep chatting with you, XXX, but I still have to feed the reindeer, and Mrs. Claus is calling me to come to dinner. I always feed the reindeer before I eat myself. Then, after dinner, I'll check to make sure that everyone's getting to bed on time. If we don't all get enough sleep, toy production slows down, and we might not finish on time for Christmas Eve. We can't have that, now can we?

Keep up the hard work, XXX, and please be sure to go to bed early on Christmas Eve. I have a lot of homes to visit, and it helps me out if everyone goes to bed early.

Merry Christmas to you and your whole family!

Santa Claus