



Postcards4VA's Guide To

# **Postcards & Postcard Parties**

By

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[www.postcards4va.com](http://www.postcards4va.com)

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## All About Postcards

### Where can I get postcards?

There are many options when it comes postcards. You can purchase already made postcards, have postcards made with your design, or you can make postcards by hand.

#### Postcard Template

Download our postcard templates at <http://www.postcards4va.com/guidelines>.

#### Downloading More Pre-Designed Postcards Option

For more options, go to **Postcards from the People** <http://postcardsfromthepeople.com> for additional designs with messages for our time that are free for you to download and print. The designs come with step-by-step instructions and are made for you to print at home or have them professionally printed. Check the site often for new designs.

#### Make Your Own

Many volunteers will enjoy designing their own postcards. We had people paint the cards. Others drew with colored markers on the cards. Some used patriotic stamps. Others used the color blue as their theme or the date of the election. We even had mothers have their children draw on the cards. The creativity that went into the postcards was amazing and we have no doubt that these one-of-a-kind creations wowed their recipient.

Check out our gallery of cards from 2017 featured on [postcards4va.com](http://postcards4va.com)

### What's needed to make my own cards?

Here's a list of the basic supplies needed to make your own cards:

- **Paper** - Postcards need to be made with cardstock paper (this is thicker paper identified by weight: 80 – 110 lb).
- **Size of cards:** In order to qualify for a postcard stamp, the card must be at least 3 ½" high, 5" long but no larger than 4 ¼" high, 6" long. Taking a sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper and cutting it into quarters works.
- **Pens:** You'll need pens for writing the message as well as pens for decorating the postcards. Sharpies, permanent marker pens, seemed to be the most popular for writing and decorating because they worked on all paper, including glossy. Many folks liked to use highlighters to emphasize key words in their message such as dates and candidate names.
- **Stickers** – Who doesn't love using stickers. Time to recycle all those stickers your kids have around the house.
- **Make your own stamps** – Have your own stamps made with key words or phrases you use, such as VOTE (in big red letters), When We Vote WE WIN, the disclaimer, and/or the date of the election.

## Importance of address lines on cards

It's important to have lines identifying where to place the stamp and address. Without these markers, people will forget to leave room and write across the entire postcard.



## Best pens for writing postcards

There are many options here.

- Sharpie brand permanent markers work best for glossy or other coated papers. They come in various thicknesses and colors and can be found almost anywhere. (Watch for back to school sales for a bargain!)
- Gel Pens are a fun option to add color. These take a bit longer to dry so be careful not to smudge your message.

## Good places to buy supplies

General supplies:

- Amazon is a good place to buy cardstock paper and stamps.
- Michaels Arts & Crafts has weekly coupons (from 40-50%) and is a great place to buy Sharpies and other colored pens.
- Dollar Stores sell paper and colored pens.

## Getting the best price on postcard printing

- **Cheapest** - Vista Print, Shutterfly or GotPrint (with coupons)
- **Second Cheapest** – Purchasing blank Avery postcards from Amazon and then printing the design on your home printer.
- **Fastest** – Not the cheapest, but you can get your cards printed while you wait at places like Office Depot or Staples

## Postcard stamps

In order to qualify for a postcard stamp (\$0.35 cents), the card cannot be folded and must be at least 3 ½" high, 5" long but no larger than 4 ¼" high, 6" long. If the dimensions are larger, the card requires a first-class stamp (\$0. 50 cents).



We've found that the most common quantity of postcards stamps available at the post office is either a sheet of 20 stamps (\$7.00) or a roll of 100 (\$35). Please note that post offices tend to have small inventories of postcard stamps and run out quickly. If your post office runs out, you can purchase postcard stamps online directly from the U.S. postal service [https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/seashells-postcard-stamp-S\\_119604](https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/seashells-postcard-stamp-S_119604)

## What to Write in the Body of the Message

Here's a list of topics to include in the body of the message. We recommend providing ideas rather than scripts. If you give a script, people will copy the script and not compose their own message. You want each postcard to have a personal, heartfelt message, one only the person writing could compose.

- **Identify Yourself/Opening Greeting**
  - "I'm your neighbor \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm writing
  - because \_\_\_\_\_"
  - "I'm a fellow [name of city, county, state]/Democrat/concerned citizen and I'm writing . . ."
  - "Hi Awesome Democrat..."
- **Share Your Message / Call to Action**
  - "Make your voice heard in 2018"
  - "Show your democratic support"
  - "Vote for [name a candidate or slate of candidates]"
  - "We need to ...."
- **Sign Off**
  - Sign your name. If you want, you can add the city or county where you're from: "Robbin from Alexandria" or "Lisa from Falls Church"
- **Be sure every card includes VOTE and the date of the election**
- **Add Disclaimer**
  - If you're using a template with the disclaimer already pre-printed, simply fill in your name.
  - If your postcards do not have the required disclaimer, add it.
- **Join Us** - Based on when you decide to mail your cards, you can include a "join us" line where you give the voter a way to contact us to get involved.

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**Signatures** - Have several people sign a card to show that the card wasn't machine or mass produced.

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### Candidate or campaign issues

Feel free to include a list of key candidate or campaign issues. There is not much room on a postcard, so summarize the key points.

## Examples

Nothing gets the creative juices flowing like examples. Bring postcard samples that you or others in your group have already written.

## Addressing the Postcards

### What to write in the address line instead of a name

We chose not to include the voter's names because they didn't opt into this. Since you don't have a name, you can still identify who the card is for. Here are some ideas:

- Awesome voter
- Important Voter
- [State name] Voter (such as Virginia Voter)

### Discourage address labels

We discourage using mailing labels. Nothing suggests that the postcard is mass produced more than a label.

## Sharing on Social Media

Encourage postcard writers to share photos of their postcards on social media. When they do, tell them to make sure the address isn't visible. This is out of courtesy to the recipient to keep their address private.

You can hide the address by covering it or digitally blurring or redacting it. Another option is to take the photo before writing the address.

It's important to be *diligent about respecting people's privacy*.

Postcard writing parties are the backbone of any postcard campaign. This is where most volunteers write their postcards. It's also an activity that volunteers find incredibly rewarding, if not therapeutic. We saw this from our own postcard parties and it was verified by our study.

*Do the party for your group. Adapt the party for the people you have there. And most importantly, have fun doing it.*

Kim Wyman, Fredericksburg, VA

Any time two or more people get together to write postcards, it can be considered a postcard party. Many groups had weekly parties that were tremendously successful. For many volunteers having something every week worked well with their schedules. Other groups would add pop-up parties when it seemed right. This is when they would decide to have a party at the last minute and put the word out who was available that day.

There are no set rules. Because these parties are so important, we thought it would be helpful if we put together a collection of advice and ideas.

### **Material to have at a postcard party**

Here's a list of material/supplies to have at a postcard party. The host can provide all of the items, or the items can be divided up among the party participants.

- **Printed Guidelines** - We find that people new to writing postcards like to have guidelines/instructions. We recommend having a few printed out for those who want them. Printing a few copies on cardstock and then placing each copy in a plastic sheet protector helps it stay clean so we could reuse it again and again.
- **Sample Completed Cards** – Have a few cards finished with sample messages. You can show how fun it is to highlight words, color on the cards and write personal, heartfelt messages. Encourage people to keep the message simple and to put it in their own voice.
- **Postcards** - We recommend having a large supply of postcards, say 25-50 per person. People will often surprise you at just how many postcards they can write.

- **Stamps** - Since this is often the most expensive item, many hosts ask the people attending to bring the stamps. Or, they ask for donations for purchasing the stamps. A roll of 100 stamps costs \$35 plus tax.
- **Pens** (Regular & colored pens/markers/highlighters) - First, you need pens for writing the messages. Then you also need markers and highlighters for emphasizing key dates and names. Encourage people to be creative and personalize both sides of the cards. Sharpies are the preferred markers because they write on all surfaces, including glossy coated paper.
- **Stickers and Stamps** – Using stickers and stamps is fun. Invite attendees to bring craft supplies to help personalize the cards.
- **Snacks and Drinks** - Like at all good parties, offer beverages and light refreshments.



## Guidelines

Before you have people start writing the postcards, we recommend having people go through our Guidelines. You can download a printable version of our Guidelines at [postcards4va.com/guidelines](http://postcards4va.com/guidelines).

## Themed party ideas

Though postcard writing can be a theme itself, lots of people have shared with us the theme they used for their party. We can't wait to hear what you come up with.

### Wine and Chocolate

Never underestimate the power of wine and chocolate. Would you rather have your friend invite you to a political postcard writing party or say "Come for Wine and Chocolate and help me write five postcards to Get Out the Vote" – once they begin they will be writing more than five – guaranteed!

### Pizza and Postcards, Pastry and Postcards, Pasta and Politics, and/or Happy Hour Postcard Parties

Postcards work with all finger food and adult beverages. Use food and drink as the draw and writing postcards for the election as the purpose.

### **Family Fun Postcard Writing**

Kids are a great addition to postcard parties. Their handwriting is adorable, and they come up with cutest messages. We had lots of groups that brought their kids to the postcard party. The older kids wrote their own messages while the younger ones decorated the cards. We even designed special postcards for coloring in for these types of parties.



*Young writers at a Fredericksburg Area Pantsuiters postcard party.*

### **Mommy and Me**

One group of new mothers got together weekly to write postcards as part of their regular *Mommy and Me* get togethers. They used the theme of being young mothers in the messages they wrote. They even got their babies to scribble on the cards.

### **Teenage Postcard Party**

Get your teenagers to host a postcard writing party so that they can be a part of democracy in action.

### **Senior Postcard Party**

Get your parents at their retirement community to host a postcard writing party.

### **Combining Postcard Writing with Canvassing or Phone Banking**

Some of the campaigns offered postcard writing before and after canvassing or alongside phone banking. The postcard writing provided a nice break and/or an alternative action for those who discovered canvassing or phone banking wasn't their thing.

### **Party organization**

There is no one right way to organize your party. Some people put out all the materials and have people get right to work. Others like to start with an explanation before writing.

*Another way to look at organization is in term of tasks. One option is to have everyone write and address their own cards. Another option is to divide up tasks such that people showcase their talent. Here are some of the stations that folks have had at parties.*



- **Handwriting** – People with good penmanship handwrite the cards.
- **Wordsmithing** – People who are good with words, come up with the message.
- **Decorating** – The artsy type draw-on, doodle, and/or highlight the postcards for emphasis.
- **Addressing** – People who want a mindless task, write the addresses.
- **Quality Control** – People who are good with details, review the cards for the correct election date, disclaimer, and check the address.

### Establish a method for checking accuracy

Mistakes can happen. Numbers can be transposed. To make sure the postcards all have the right election day (yes, we heard that some cards accidentally had the primary date on them rather than the general) we recommend assigning someone to review the cards for quality control. Have someone give the cards a last-minute look checking for the following:

- Card is stamped
- Dates are correct
- If applicable, disclaimer is on the card
- Address is complete



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## Postcard Party Tips from the Fredericksburg Area Pantsuiters

**Assembly Line Production** - We found a fun and productive way to write a bunch of postcards in one sitting was to form an assembly line with some writing the message and others addressing the cards. At the end, we'd all go around and sign the cards.

**Using Your Own Designs** - If you come up with a great design, such as when we put stickers all over a card and everyone agreed it was one of our best looks, get copies of the card made so the entire group can use the design.

**Postcard Party Bag** - Have a postcard party bag with pens, markers, highlighters, postcards, and stamps always ready to go.

**To-go Packs** - Make postcard to-go packs for those who can't attend a party.

**Importance of Refreshments** - Bribe people with food—donuts, candy, even sheet cake.

**Motto** - If you're not having fun writing postcards, you're doing something wrong.

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*The powerhouse women of Fredericksburg Area Pantsuiters met weekly and wrote thousands of postcards for Virginia candidates.*

# Twitter Gallery of 2017 Postcards





