January is a good time of year to make new years resolutions about physical activity. In addition to making personal resolutions, you can also try to make your community more aware of the importance of being physically active.

This month you and your club can write letters to your local representatives about making your community safer for children to be active. Before you and your club write your letters, it is important that you know how to write a letter that will stand out. Concise, well thought out personal letters are one of the most effective ways that Americans can influence law-makers.

Think Locally
It’s usually best to send letters to the Representative from your local Congressional District or to your State Representatives or Senators. It also helps to personalize your letter because it separates your letter from other “cookie-cutter” messages that Legislators may receive.

Keep it Simple
Your letter should address a single topic or issue. Typed, one-page letters are best. It is recommended to use a three-paragraph letter structure like this:

1. Say who you are and what you’re writing about. If you want a response, you must include your name and address.
2. Provide enough detail. Be factual and not emotional. Provide specific rather than general information about how the safety of your community affects how active children can be.
3. Close by requesting the action you want taken: a vote for or against a bill, or change in general policy.

The best letters are courteous, to the point, and include specific supporting examples.

Addressing Members of Congress
The following formats show you how to appropriately address your letter:

To your Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:

The Honorable (full name)  
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

When writing to the Chairperson of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, address them as:

Dear Mr. Chairman  
Dear Madam Chairwoman

Dear Mr. Speaker  
Dear Madam Speaker

The above addresses should be used in email messages and for those sent through the Postal Service.

Here are some do’s and don’ts when writing to your elected representatives:

**Always**
- Be courteous and respectful without “gushing.”
- Clearly and simply state the purpose of your letter.
- Say who you are. Anonymous letters go nowhere. If you do not include at least your name and address, you will not get a response.
- Keep your letter short, one page is best.
- Use specific examples or evidence to support your position.
- State what it is you want done or recommend a course of action.
- Thank the member for taking the time to read your letter.

**Never**
- Use profanity or threatening language. These are both inappropriate and rude.
- Let your passion for the subject get in the way of making your point.
- Demand a response.

Writing letters to local government is a great way to share your opinions and to express just how important it is for children to get active! You should support what you write in your letter by continuing to be active during the winter months.

Source:  (www.usgovinfo.about.com)