

Public Comment Letter Writing

Advocacy includes getting people engaged in the issues of their local communities through public comments that can help affect change when brought forth to decision makers. This activity hones the skills of engaging in argument from evidence in the name of stewardship of a public issue.

Objectives:

- To make a claim about a shark conservation issue and provide evidence to support it.
- To engage in advocacy by submitting public comments that inform legislature and/or decision makers.

Materials:

- Excerpt from [Global Priorities for Conserving Sharks and Rays: A 2015–2025 strategy](#)
- [Double Entry Journal](#)
- [Letter writing template](#)

Process:

- 1) The teacher identifies a local conservation issue involving sharks as well as the local decision makers who have the authority to affect change on this issue. Then introduce the public policy issue and ask students to reflect on it.
**If there is not a current local conservation issue, students can write letters generally speaking about shark conservation.*
- 2) Distribute the excerpt text from Global Priorities for Conserving Sharks and Rays: A 2015–2025 strategy and the [double entry journal](#) handout. Explain that the handout can be used while reading through the article or after having read it once. Chunks of text have been inserted into the middle column. Have students respond to the text in their own words on the left side and summarize the ideas from the text on the right side.
- 3) Students receive the [letter writing template](#) and read the directions on the first page. Explain to students:
 - a. Decide where you stand on the issue. Are you for or against shark conservation? You will need evidence to support your stance which can have come from a variety of sources.
 - b. Determine who in your legislature the letter will be addressed to and where this representative stands on the issue.
 - c. Write a persuasive letter that states your position on the issue, provides evidence from credible sources, and explains how this evidence supports your position.

4) Mail it! Be sure to include your return address in case your representative would like to respond.

Modification:

If you're working with younger students try out these other strategies for informing legislature.

- a. Send a postcard to your decision maker with a short message on what you would like to see done in shark conservation. On the front of the postcard, draw your favorite shark in its habitat!
- b. Write a poem expressing your feelings on sharks and send it to your representative.
- c. Write an original song that references your stance on the advocacy [shark conservation] issue and highlights key pieces of factual information. Get a group together to perform and record it. Send your music video performance to your local decision maker.

Supplemental Resources:

- a. For representatives in the United States, visit [Find Your Representative](#).
- b. Original article: [Global Priorities for Conserving Sharks and Rays: A 2015–2025 Strategy](#).

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