

Send a care package. Few things express love like a care package. Think about what your loved one might really miss from home or need. Decorate the package with some drawings. Here are some items you may want to pack:

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| -Postage Stamps | -Stationary | -Wet Wipes |
| - Recent photos | -1 News clippings | - Drink mixes |
| -Letters from friends | -Peanuts and pretzels | -Sunscreen |
| -Travel-sized toiletries | -Family newsletter | -Chapstick |
| -Disposable camera | -Playing cards | -Sunglasses |
| -Microwave popcorn | -Homemade drawings or crafts | -Tea bags |
| -Hard candy | -Batteries | -CDs or tapes |
| -Paperback books | -Cookies | -Hand sanitizer |
| -Send a book of her/his favorite cartoon strip | | |

Letters are one of the best ways to communicate with someone you love. Email works faster, but a letter often means more. You can hold a letter in your hand, reread it over and over, remember the unique handwriting and keep it forever. Plus, you are filling up that lonely mailbox overseas! Remember that your loved one is interested in you. News about your daily life and what's going on with the family, even small details will make your loved one feel closer to home. Here are some letter writing tips:

- Include news about what's happening in your town!
- Don't forget to write about funny stuff!
- Support your loved one with words of encouragement.
- Be sure to say, "I love you!"
- Look at your loved one's picture while you write!

Something's you can include in your letter are:

- How many goals you scored in your last soccer game
- What happened when your family went to the zoo last weekend
- When the dog licked the icing off your mom's cake before dinner
- What you're learning in science right now
- Your best time in the 50-yard dash in gym class
- The wild tale of how your baby tooth finally fell out
- What kind of flowers you might plant in the front yard this year
- Your "A" on a recent English test

Keep a journal. Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal or a diary. This is a place where you can explore your private thoughts about the deployment and your loved one-by yourself. You can also include poems, quotations, songs, ideas, prayers, and sketches. Whenever you miss your loved one or feel sad about the deployment, write in your journal. It will make you feel much better!

Create a scrapbook. Gather photos, news clippings, ticket stubs and other mementos. Use colorful paper and stickers to accent these pieces. Include a title at the top of each scrapbook page. You can buy a blank scrapbook at the store or make your own with construction paper, a hole puncher and colored yarn tied in bows. Decorate the cover with stickers and other craft materials as well. Present the scrapbook to your loved one when he/she returns.

Send videotapes. When your loved one is deployed, he or she might not be able to attend an important event in your life. But just because your loved one isn't there, doesn't mean he/she has to miss the event. Videotape big events like a birthday party, awards ceremony, concert, confirmation or bar mitzvah, graduation, sports event, science fair, play, etc. Include short interviews with people at the event. You might want to ask an adult to help you combine lots of events onto one video. You could even make a CD! Either send the tapes in a care package or keep them at home for when your loved one returns home.

Trade something with your loved one. Ask them to loan you something special to keep while they are away. Some examples include: a pillow, a t-shirt or a hat.

Decorate a t-shirt. Use permanent markers or fabric markers to decorate a plain white or green t-shirt for your loved one. This is something they can take or send it in a care package.

Make a tape. Tape your loved one's favorite radio station and send it to them.

Send a special (Christmas, birthday, etc.) care package. Include a small tree with ornaments, some stocking and some gifts to open on Christmas. Send a disposable camera and have them take photos.

Buy a nice picture frame and send it to him/her with your picture in it. Write a special note to him on the back of the frame.

Send a box of his/her favorite kind of Girl Scout cookie.

Leave a message on loved ones voice mail. Also, leave a message for your deployed soldier. Leave the message on your voice mail, so they can access it. Leave it as a message, so they can only hear it. Make sure they have the code to get to the voicemail.

Before you leave, pick a star together that will be "your" star. Every time you see that star, think of each other.

When he/she is preparing to leave, sneak little notes into his bags. Also, if your deploying, leave the messages around the house.

Place a quarter in a jar for every day that he/she is apart from you. When you are reunited use the money to go to the movies or amusement park.

Set a clock in your home to the time zone your loved one is in.

Send a list of your favorite jokes.

Buy two identical pairs of holiday socks and send one pair to your loved one. Choose a day when you will both wear the socks.

Use Yahoo Messenger to visit with your loved one.

Buy a computer game that you and your child can play together using the Internet.

Buy your loved one a talking frame and put your picture inside it. Record a fun message.