Open When letters are a great way to keep in touch with your loved one and send a little instant encouragement. They’re also fantastic for deployments that may be difficult to get mail to (like submarines or special ops) or situations that don’t have ready internet access.

If you haven’t sent an Open When letter, it’s as simple or involved as you want it to be. At the simplest, you write a letter for each topic, and then enclose it in an envelope with the instructions written on the front. When John deployed to Afghanistan, I made 30 of them to guarantee that he had mail for at least a month. (I wasn’t sure how long it would take mail to get to Afghanistan at the time.)

If you want to get a little crazier and creative, think about enclosing small gifts that have to do with the topic or decorating the outsides. For example, for my sister’s going away party, my other sister and I made 30 Open When letters each all with very specific, very in-joke-y topics and contents. “When You’re Missing America” had a packet of peanut butter inside. “When you need a laugh” included quotes from Arrested Development. “When you need to party” had a deflated balloon in it. You get the picture. See an example of what they look like here.

You can give a packet of these letters at the beginning of the separation or send them later in a care package. It’s up to you and the situation to decide when’s best to give them.

Most of these topics are self-explanatory; however, for those that aren’t, I’ve added notes on the side to point you in a direction, if you need a little help getting started.
- **it’s your birthday.** Send a picture of you wearing a party hat.
- **it’s my birthday.**
- **you’re missing home.**
- **you’re missing me.**
- **you need a kiss.** Enclose a piece of paper you’ve kissed with heavy lipstick.
- **you need a hug.** Send cut outs of your hands connected by a ribbon or string, the length of your arms. It’s a mailable hug!
- **you’re stressed out.**
- **you need to smile.**
- **you need a laugh.**
- **you’re feeling goofy.** Include the dorkiest knock-knock or inside jokes you can think of.
- **you’re feeling down.**
- **you need strength.**
- **you’re bored.**
- **you’re having a bad day.**
- **you’re having a great day.** Include a mini banner or a small bag of confetti.
- **you want to talk to me.** Include a piece of stationary, envelope, and a note to write you a letter.
- **you are celebrating an accomplishment.** Send a “#1” pin. (You can find these at party stores pretty easily.)
- **we’ve said goodbye.**
- **you’ve been deployed for a week.** Send a party confetti popper.
- **you’ve been deployed for 30 days.**
- **you’re halfway through with deployment.**
- **you’re in the last month of your deployment.**
- **you’re on the plane/boat home.**
- **it’s our anniversary.** A small photo album (you can pick them up for $1 at Target or WalMart) or picture or two works well here.
- **we haven’t been able to talk in a while.** A conversational letter might be a great choice for this letter—so it feels like you’re talking on the phone.
- **you want to hold my hand.** Use a glove to create a handwarmer. Use this easy tutorial to send this romantic gift.
- **you don’t feel loved.**
- **you don’t feel respected at work.**
- **you don’t feel needed.**
- **it’s Christmas.**
- **it’s New Year’s Eve.** Send a bag of confetti.
- **it’s New Year’s Day.** Send a list of wishes for the new year.
- **it’s Valentine’s Day.**
- **it’s St. Patrick’s Day.**
- **it’s Easter.**
- **it’s Memorial Day.**
- **it’s Independence Day.**
- **it’s Talk Like a Pirate Day.** Send a letter on a tea-stained scroll that they can open on Sept. 19.
- **it’s Halloween.**
- **it’s Veterans Day.**
- **it’s Thanksgiving.**
- **it’s [insert holiday of your choosing].**
- **it’s the first day of Winter.**
- **it’s the first day of Spring.**
- **it’s the first day of Summer.**
- **it’s the first day of Fall.**
- **it’s [child’s name] birthday.**
- **you need a reminder of how much I love you.**
- **you’re feeling nostalgic.** Include photos from early in your relationship.
- **you’re feeling sick.** Include cough drops or a travel-sized tablet of Airborne
OPEN WHEN
Letter Topics

Romantic
...it’s our anniversary.
...you want to hold my hand.
...you need a reminder of how much I love you.
...you need me.
...you’ve forgotten what I smell like.
...you’re thinking about me.
...you want to talk to me and we can’t.
...you’re feeling romantic.
...you need a reminder why I love you.

Encouraging
...you need a pep talk.
...you miss your friends.
...you’re tired of deployment.
...you’re thinking about the future.
...you need courage.
...you need to pray.
...you feel really far away.
...you feel alone.
...you’re worried.
...you’re discouraged.
...you need to hear a few compliments.

Celebration
...it’s your birthday.
...you’re having a great day.
...you are celebrating an accomplishment.
...you’ve been deployed for a week.
...you’re halfway through with deployment.
...it’s our anniversary.
...it’s Talk Like a Pirate Day.
...it’s the first day of Winter.

FIND THE REST AT
JOMYGOSH.COM
...and 100s of deployment, military life, relationship, and care package tips and posts!
**Open when**

- you can’t sleep. Include a tea bag of peppermint or lavender tea.
- you’re tired.
- you’re homesick. Include a postcard from home.
- you miss the USA.
- you need me.
- you’re angry with me.
- you’ve forgotten what I smell like. Include a small tester of your perfume or spray a piece of cloth with your scent and seal it in a Ziploc.
- you need a pep talk.
- I’m sad and you don’t know what to do.
- you miss your friends. Collect notes from friends for this Open When letter.
- you need reassurance.
- you’re disappointed.
- I’m angry with you.
- you’re tired of deployment.
- you’re nervous.
- you’re embarrassed.
- you’re not sure what to do.
- you are impatient.
- you’re thinking about the future.
- it’s miserable outside.
- it’s beautiful outside.
- you’re thinking about me.
- you need to complain. Include paper and an envelope with instructions to write down his/her rant and mail them back to you.
- you need courage.
- you need to make a decision.
- you don’t feel appreciated.
- you’re ready to give up.
- you’re tired of being patient.
- something isn’t going your way.
- you need to pray.
- you feel really far away.
- you feel alone.
- something’s gone wrong.
- you want to talk to me and we can’t.
- you’ve finished a really good book/show/movie.
- something exciting happened.
- you experienced something you want to share with me.
- you did something dumb.
- you’re worried.
- you need to make a decision. An encouraging note, quotes, or religious verses would work well for this letter.
- you feel caged.
- you’re feeling romantic.
- you miss our date nights.
- you want to take your mind off something.
- you’re discouraged.
- you need to hear a few compliments.
- you need a reminder why I love you.
- you’re missing our/your pet. Picture opportunity!
- you’re missing our kids. Send artwork or letters from your kiddos. If they’re too young for that, send pictures. (Or send all three and split it up in multiple envelopes.)
- you feel left out.
- you want to open a letter.