



History from Home

WRITE A WWII V-MAIL



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18900 Jefferson Davis Highway
Triangle, VA 22172
www.usmcmuseum.com | 703-784-4464

WWII V-Mail

During the Second World War, Americans on the homefront were asked to join the fight in any way they could. From growing a victory garden, rationing food staples, like butter and meat, or recycling rubber, metal, and even ladies stockings, children and their parents could do their part for the war effort. Most people on the homefront knew someone who was fighting, and would write to them regularly. Letters sent from home were a lifeline to Marines and other servicemen serving far away and helped them endure the severity and loneliness of war.

Just like other day-to-day activities were changed, mailing letters to loved ones fighting overseas changed too. To reduce the amount of valuable cargo space letters were taking up on ships, government officials created Victory Mail, or V-Mail, a system modeled off of the British Airgraph Service. The writer wrote on a special V-Mail sheet, which was then reduced to a thumbnail size microfilm. The film was then sent to developing stations near the addressee, where it would be reprinted at one-quarter the size of the original letter. This system drastically increased the amount of letters that could be sent on a ship. For example, 150,000 letters, which would normally take up 37 mails bags, was reduced to one mail bag.

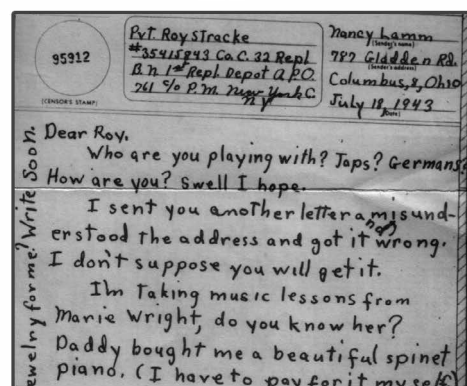
How much mail was sent? **At the Victory Mail processing facility on Iwo Jima**, 10 Marines (3 Victory Technicians, and 7 to sort mail) were responsible for an average of 25,000 letters, per day. On a peak day, they sorted 167,000 individual pieces of mail.

Directions:

1. First, decide who you will be sending your V-Mail letter to. On the following page, write their address in the section labeled (#1) on the illustration to the right. Ask your parents for help if you do not know the address of your intended recipient. Write your name and/or address in the “From” section next to the recipient, labeled (#2).
2. Use a pencil or pen and write your message in the space marked (#3). Keep in mind, original V-Mail letters were not allowed to disclose personal information on locations and whereabouts that would not pass the censor who looked through all letters before they were sent to the recipient. A parent can act as your censor. They can use a black marker to black out any sensitive information. Once they have approved your letter, they can put their initials in the censor circle (#4).
3. After it has passed the “censor,” fold your letter and send it in a stamped envelope. Or send it to a loved one in your home!

Materials:

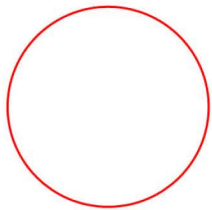
- V-Mail letter sheets
- Pencil or pen
- Envelope and stamp (if sending to family or loved ones)



Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

4 <small>(CENSOR'S STAMP)</small>	To: 1	From: 2
3		
<small>Have you filled in complete address at top?</small>	REPLY BY V *** - MAIL	<small>Have you filled in complete address at top?</small>
<small>POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 15</small>		

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To:

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

From:

(Sender's complete address above)

Have you filled in complete address at top?

REPLY BY
V * - MAIL**

Have you filled in complete address at top?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 15