



How to write a Sympathy card

Sympathy card

Do

Write it out on rough paper first. Even if you think you know what to say putting it down on paper first will help you realise if it looks OK written down and if it will fit in the space available. If it doesn't fit, include a note with the card as well.

Read it aloud from your rough draft – sometimes what seems good in your head doesn't work when read by another. Hearing it aloud can help you work out why not.

Write from the heart. If you tell the truth about how you feel, this will come across. That doesn't mean you should disclose a "warts & all" history that most likely would be inappropriate. It does mean expressing genuine thoughts and feelings.

Include a fond memory of the person who died. Stories about a shared occasion or even a shared moment help reassure the bereft that their loved one will not be forgotten.

Use "I imagine" or "I can't imagine" to express empathy. For example "I can't begin to imagine how much you miss John". There is something very non-threatening about the word imagine, it allows you to express the truth without imposing your feelings on them.

Write clearly. A griever will almost certainly have a reduced ability to concentrate, and possibly will be reading your message through tears. Don't make their life harder still with barely legible writing.

Don't

Rely on the printed message – make it personal.

Simply sign your first name – how many people called Dave/Sarah did this person know?

Assume that the loss is in any way a good thing or a blessing ie. Don't say "at least he's free from pain" or similar.

Assume that the loss is less because the person was older or had been ill for a long time. Loss is loss.

Make comparisons – "I know how you feel" is not only untruthful – you really don't know – it assumes the loss is comparable which it isn't as all loss is unique.



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