Open When letters as a gift

How to package the set, what to tuck in with each letter, and how to hand it over so the first one already feels like a surprise.

A stack of Open When letters is already a good gift. Each one waits for a moment: a bad day, a sleepless night, the morning of a big interview. The person you give them to carries a small piece of you into those moments.

What turns the stack into something they keep for years is the rest of it. How the set looks when they first see it. The tea bag in the envelope for the night they can't sleep. The way it reaches them. None of this needs money. It needs a little thought about the person and the moment.

This guide covers the parts around the letters: packaging, small add-ins matched to specific letters, ways to deliver them as a surprise, and combinations that suit common occasions. It ends with a short checklist for the day you hand it over.

Ways to package the set

Pick one container and keep it simple. The packaging is the first thing they see, but the letters are what they come back to. Choose something that is easy to find a letter in at 2am.

1. ### A keepsake box
   A shoebox covered in paper, a wooden box or a sturdy gift box. Stand the envelopes upright like files so every label shows at a glance.

2. ### A glass jar
   Fold small letters or roll them and tie each with thread. A jar works well for many short notes, less well for long letters that need to stay flat.

3. ### A ribbon bundle
   Stack the envelopes, tie them with ribbon or twine, and tuck a dried flower under the knot. It looks like a packet of old love letters, which is half the charm.

4. ### Tucked inside a book
   Slip envelopes between the pages of a book that means something to you both. Put each letter near a page that fits it, so finding one becomes part of the reading.

5. ### A small photo album
   Use the sleeves of a cheap album for envelopes instead of photos, with one picture of you on the facing page for each letter.

6. ### Numbered envelopes
   Number the letters as well as labelling them. It helps them see how many are left, and a number on the front of a sealed envelope is a small tease on its own.

7. ### Wax seals
   A wax seal on each envelope makes opening one feel like an occasion. Use a single colour for the whole set, or a different colour for happy and hard moments.

8. ### Colour coding
   Pick envelope colours by mood: one for sad days, one for good news, one for missing you. They can find the right one without reading every label.

9. ### A folder or accordion file
   Practical for a big set or for someone moving into a dorm or shared room. It packs flat and keeps letters from getting crushed.

10. ### A tin
    A biscuit or tea tin is sturdy, small and survives a suitcase. Line it with paper and write "Open when you open this tin" on the lid.

11. ### A first letter that explains the rest
    Put one envelope on top marked "Read me first". Say what the letters are, that there is no wrong time to open one, and that you meant every word.

Small things to tuck in with specific letters

An add-in works when it belongs to the moment on the envelope. Keep each one small, flat and cheap enough that losing it would not matter. One thing per letter is plenty, and some letters are better with nothing but words.

1. ### Open when you can't sleep: a tea bag
   Chamomile or something caffeine-free, with a line telling them to go and make it before they keep reading.

2. ### Open when you miss me: a photo
   Not your best photo, a real one. The blurry selfie from that day, with what was happening written on the back.

3. ### Open when you need to hear my voice: a voice note code
   A QR code or link to a short recording of you. Read part of the letter out loud, or just say goodnight.

4. Open when you need a laugh: a terrible joke
   Print a few awful jokes on a card or tuck in a strip of photo booth pictures where you both look ridiculous.

5. Open when you need a coffee: a coin or a gift card
   A coin taped inside or a small coffee shop card. Tell them to get out of the house and sit somewhere with it.

6. Open when you're stressed: a sheet face mask
   Flat enough for an envelope. Add a line giving them permission to do nothing for twenty minutes.

7. Open when you're sad: a playlist
   Write the track list by hand, or add a scannable code. Explain why one song is on there.

8. Open when you're sick: a sachet of soup or a cough sweet
   And a reminder to drink water. Small care, written down, feels like you're in the room.

9. Open when you miss home: a pressed leaf or flower from home
   Something from the garden, the park you walked in, or the street they grew up on.

10. Open when you can't remember my smell: a scented card
    A spritz of your perfume or cologne on a card, sealed in a small zip bag so it lasts longer.

11. Open when you're bored: a puzzle or a list
    A crossword you made about the two of you, a word search, or a list of ten things to do this afternoon.

12. Open when you need a hug: a hug coupon
    A card that says "good for one long hug, redeemable next time we see each other". Cheesy, and they will keep it.

13. Open when it's your birthday: a candle
    One birthday candle and a match, or a tiny confetti packet. Make them light it before reading.

14. Open when you're nervous before something big: a lucky charm
    A coin from the year you met, a small token, or a pebble from a beach you went to together.

15. Open when you've had a fight with me: a white flag
    A tiny paper flag on a toothpick, and a letter that says what you love about them even when you're angry.

16. Open when you feel alone: a list of people who love you
    Write the names, with one sentence each about why. Add their numbers if they might hesitate to call.

17. Open when you need a pep talk: a sticky note pad
    Write ten encouraging lines on the first ten sticky notes so they can put them on a mirror or laptop.

18. Open when you want a date night: a recipe card
    A recipe you both like, so you can cook the same meal on a call, or a movie you'll both press play on at the same time.

19. Open when it's raining: hot chocolate
    A single sachet and a short list of things you'd do together on a rainy day if you were there.
20. Open when you need to cry: a tissue
    One tissue, folded neatly. A little silly, a little kind, and it tells them crying is allowed.
21. Open when you get good news: a party popper or confetti
    Something small and loud. Write how proud you are, before you even know what the news is.
22. Open on your first night in the new place: a night light or tea light
    A small light for a room that does not feel like theirs yet.
23. Open when you need to remember us: a ticket stub
    From your first film, concert or train ride together. The letter tells the story of that day.
24. Open when you can't decide something: a coin to flip
    And a note that says whatever side they find themselves hoping for is the answer.
25. Open when you need a reason to smile: a seed packet
    Something easy, like basil or sunflowers. A small thing that grows while they wait for whatever comes next.
26. Open when you feel ugly or unwanted: a mirror sticker
    A small sticker that says "look who I love" for the bathroom mirror.

Surprise delivery ideas

How the set arrives can be as memorable as what is in it. Choose the one that suits the person: some people love a hunt, others just want to find it quietly.

1. Hidden in their suitcase
   Slip the set into a side pocket before they pack the last things. They find it when they unpack in the new place, which is often the loneliest hour of the trip.
2. Mailed one at a time
   Post one letter a week instead of the whole set. They get something real in the mailbox every week, and you can write later letters as things change.
3. A scavenger hunt
   Hide the letters around the house with a clue in each one pointing to the next. The last clue leads to the box with the rest.
4. Left with a friend
   Give the set to a roommate, parent or friend who lives near them, and ask them to hand it over on a set day.

5. ### Under the pillow on the last night
   Put the first letter under their pillow the night before they leave, with a note saying where the rest are.

6. ### In a lunch box or work bag
   Tuck one letter in on a day you know will be hard, like a first shift or an exam.

7. ### Handed over at the airport
   Give the set at the gate with one rule: nothing gets opened until the plane takes off.

8. ### Digital letters that wait for the date
   When you can't hand anything over in person, write the letters online instead. On OpenWhen you can seal digital letters for free, set one to stay locked until a date, or ask a question only they can answer before it opens. If you still want paper, there are printable envelope kits too.

9. ### Paper and digital together
   Give a small paper set by hand, and keep a few digital letters sealed for dates you'll be apart, like their birthday or the night before a visit.

Gift combos by occasion

A few pairings that work well together. Use them as a starting point and swap in the moments you know they'll face.

1. ### Birthday
   A box of letters for the year ahead, one for each month, with a candle tucked into the birthday one. Add a letter to open on the next birthday.

2. ### Anniversary
   A ribbon bundle of letters about moments from this year, with a ticket stub or photo in each. Seal one to open on next year's anniversary.

3. ### Going away or moving abroad
   A tin that fits in carry-on luggage, with letters for the first night, the first bad day and the first time something good happens there. A local tea bag in the homesick one.

4. ### College send-off
   An accordion file for a dorm room: first night, first exam, first time they're sick, first time they call home crying. A coffee card in the exam letter.

5. ### Deployment or basic training
   Letters mailed one at a time, since a full box may not be allowed or practical. Keep add-ins flat and check the mail rules first.

6. Goodbye after a long distance visit
   Hide a small set in their bag on the last morning: one for the flight home, one for the morning after, one for when the next visit feels too far away.

7. Christmas apart
   A few letters to open on Christmas Eve, Christmas morning and New Year's Eve, sent ahead or sealed online, with a hot chocolate sachet in the Christmas Eve one.

Before you hand it over

- ☐ Every envelope has a clear label and, if you like, a number.
- ☐ There is a "Read me first" letter on top.
- ☐ Add-ins are flat, sealed and not going to melt, leak or stain.
- ☐ Nothing in the set needs a date or detail that might change before it's opened.
- ☐ You've read each letter once more, out loud, for tone.
- ☐ There is at least one funny letter among the hard ones.
- ☐ Anything mailed meets the size, weight and content rules of where it's going.
- ☐ For digital letters, you've tested that the answer to the question is one they will get right.
- ☐ You've decided how you'll hand it over, and you've kept a list of what you wrote.

Questions people ask

What do you put in Open When letters?

A letter written for one specific moment, like a sleepless night or a hard day at work, and often one small thing that fits that moment: a tea bag, a photo, a playlist, a coin for a coffee. Keep the add-ins flat and let the words do most of the work.

How many Open When letters should I give as a gift?

Four to six is a good first set: enough that the right letter exists for the moments you can predict, few enough that each one gets your full attention. You can always add more later, one at a time. It's better to give six letters you mean than thirty that repeat each other.

What can I put Open When letters in?

A box, a jar, a tin, a ribbon bundle, or between the pages of a book that means something to you both. Choose something that makes it easy to find the right letter quickly.

Are Open When letters a good gift for a boyfriend?

Yes, especially if you're apart often or he keeps feelings to himself. Pick moments he'll actually face, like a stressful week at work or the night after you leave, and add something he'd use, like a coffee card or a playlist.

How do I give Open When letters if we live far apart?

Mail them one at a time, ask a friend near them to deliver the set, or write them as digital letters that stay sealed until a date or until they answer a question.

What is the difference between an Open When jar and Open When letters?

A jar usually holds many short notes, rolled or folded, for daily reading or quick lifts. Letters are longer, each tied to a specific moment. Some people give both: a jar for everyday and a few letters for the big moments.

Write it tonight. They open it at the right moment.

Seal an Open When letter for free at openwhen.cards