

Santa letter-writing secrets

At the tip of the North Pole resides a jolly man who collects letters from children asking him to deliver all of their hearts' desires. Although Santa Claus does a thorough job of making sure children's treats are delivered on the same night, sometimes he needs assistance with reading and responding to the thousands upon thousands of letters sent to him each year. That is why he often relies on an extensive list of helpers to handle much of his holiday correspondence.

According to Smithsonian, the practice of writing to St. Nick dates back more than 150 years. Early depictions of Santa show him as a disciplinarian. The first Christmastime Santa

letters were actually sent by Santa, rather than the other way around. Such letters encouraged children to be good boys and girls. Eventually, an illustration by Thomas Nast depicted "Santaclausville, N.P." as Santa's address, providing children with a place where they could send their correspondences to the big guy in red.

The Universal Postal Union, an intergovernmental organization that coordinates postal policies across 192 member nations, indicates that 1,350,000 letters to Santa were sent by Canadians, while Americans sent more than one million and Britains mailed roughly 800,000 such letters in 2012, the most recent year

from which figures are available. To account for the staggering number of letters sent, various post offices and postal programs were established to help Santa with the task of tackling children's wish lists.

In Canada, children can address letters to Santa and use the postal code H0H, 0H0. In 2016, the USPS instituted a new letter-writing option that enables parents or guardians to include a personalized response letter back to children who address letters to Santa. The package can be postmarked to: North Pole Postmark Postmaster, 4141 Postmark Drive, Anchorage, AK 99530-9998.

Many other letters to San-

ta end up routing to various post offices where thousands of volunteer "elves" can adopt letters and make children's wishes come true. A "Letters to Santa" program enables children in serious need to get items that can help keep them safe and happy.

Parents may also investigate a number of services that will provide letters from Santa, Mrs. Claus or elves for nominal fees. These letters can be personalized with details. Santa has even gone high-tech with personalized videos and pictures as well. A quick web search can yield the instructions on how prospective helpers can get started.

Children can improve



their chances of letters being read and received, with these tips.

- Identify who is writing the letter and share some

details about your life. · Make sure you've been nice and well-behaved.

- Ask Santa how he has

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