

OneLink Team Weekly Emails
DO NOT TAKE THIS PAPER WITH YOU OVERSEAS

Guidelines & Tips for the team Email Writer (Team Gatekeeper)

Why: Purpose/Vision

During the summer when your team is exhausted, writing an update weekly can seem like a burden. As the team Email Writer, help remind and cast vision to your team of the purpose of these emails.

- **Prayer Partnership**
 - Your team needs prayer support for the battlefield you are entering! Sharing weekly PR requests allows brothers & sisters back home to “hold the rope” for your team. Remind your team throughout the summer that many people on the other end of these updates are lifting up your team and ministry to the Father!
- **Honoring Financial Supporters** (ie Phil 4:3-7 & Phil 4:17)
 - Many people gave sacrificially to assist you to go overseas and share Jesus with those who have not heard. In Paul’s letters he states that those who gave to his ministry are a significant part of the Kingdom work. Thank them and honor them by keeping them in the loop. People who give financially (whether they know you or not personally) are also more *invested* and therefore more likely to pray for you!
- **Honoring Parents** (Exodus 20:12)
 - Until you have children yourself, you will never fully understand your parent’s concern for you and your teammates. Some parents feel very comfortable with sending their children overseas, but for some it is a very challenging and even frightening experience for them. Regardless of your understanding of why some parents are so concerned, as followers of Jesus, we are commanded to love and honor our parents. One important and simple way to do this is to send *timely* and *regular* (every week) emails to let our parents know we are well and that they can trust the Lord with their children.
- **It is Not About You**
 - Help to remind your team that these updates are ultimately “not about you.” They are not your social media time, your inside joke time, or your verbal processing time. They are for the glory of God and for encouraging the body of Christ and, as Paul’s update letters were, can be a powerful tool to these ends.

Why: Security Matters

Remember, when we refer to “security,” this is primarily about the security of your Host’s, their kingdom work, and your national friends, both believers and those who do not yet know Christ. If, for instance, the Chinese government discovers your activity, the worst that will likely happen to your team is a brief questioning time, potentially a stamp in your passport to not return, and an immediate flight home. The ramifications to your Hosts, their work, and local friends, however, could be *much* more severe. Again, this is not about you. Although we will make mistakes, and many things are outside of our control, we want to do the best we can to grow in discernment and be as faithfully careful as we are able.

What: Your Role

Here are your responsibilities as the team Email Writer:

- Help team to finalize the email list
 - A google spreadsheet or similar may help. It takes more time than you think to collect emails, so remind your team to start collecting *now*.
- Instruct your team on what the plan is, why (vision), and how to write updates
- Instruct your stateside Gatekeeper on security protocol (you can give them this document) & process (see Communicating Home article on the training website)
- During the summer, write a weekly summary, highlights & team prayer requests section
- Proofread and edit your own and your team member’s personal updates for security issues
- Make sure the email gets sent weekly (Late emails invite worry for parents especially)
- Make sure a brief “safe arrival” email gets sent asap after arrival in-country

How: Example Email Outline

You are welcome and encouraged to write an update as creatively as you like! Here are some recommendations of what to include:

- **Summary & Highlights**
 - A long list of everything you did may not be as encouraging as a brief overview & maybe a highlight story of a friendship or event
- **Team Prayer Requests**
 - This helps people know how to pray for you! Don't forget to use safe language and pseudonyms for friends.
- **Photos**
 - Everyone loves photos! Too many or large files may make the email difficult to send, though
 - Figure out a way to edit photos to blur or cut friend's and Host's faces, or just leave out those photos
- **Personal note from each team member**
 - Let them know ahead of time if there is a word limit (especially if you have a large team)
 - It has worked well for some teams to do a 5-10 sentence limit per person, to keep everyone intentional with what they share and to refrain from repeating the same stories.
 - Encourage them to write out (ie in their journals) what they are going to say, to make it faster
 - Ask your Team Leader what a good time each week to write these is, so that it isn't burdensome each week when it comes up.

How: Important Points

- **Keep it brief**
 - You want people to read the email
 - You don't want these updates to become a burden, for instance spending half your Sabbath day or staying up late at night writing (if you like to write a lot, you can keep the rest in a journal to share with others when you return home)
- **Personal stories are powerful**
 - Encourage your team to share one story of their own growth/learning, or of one friend they had a great connection with. This helps people pray and casts vision for your purpose there.
- **Avoid too many inside jokes**
 - Fun and funny updates are great – people love reading them! But if the fun is all inside jokes that only your team or one friend back home understands, it might not fit the purpose of the updates.
- **Do not include crazy stories that will worry parents or be misunderstood**
 - Your email updates and 20 minute calls with parents are **NOT** the times to talk about how you “almost died” (in traffic, going to the hospital, because of getting lost, etc.). Encourage teammates **NOT** to exaggerate, and edit their posts if they mention anything. You can be honest and share how you were/are sick and ask for prayer, but without context or time to explain things, your poor grandmothers will not understand “We almost got taken in and questioned by police but haha it all turned out okay,” or “I've been puking my guts out and had to go to the hospital to get an IV for dehydration, but I'm all good now so no worries.”
 - Another thing to avoid is any political content or anything that could be misunderstood by a foreign government or people reading your email. For instance – “I hope you all have a great fourth of July blowing stuff up!” or “America is the greatest” or, conversely “America is the worst.”
- **Always proofread**

This is your main job. Don't leave it all to your Stateside Gatekeeper, they may not catch everything.

Your Stateside Gatekeeper

- Work with your team leader to choose a wise Gatekeeper - Campus Ministry staff and OneLink alumni are best. Your best friend that has never been overseas and may forget to check their email is not best.
- Explain and emphasize security concerns
- Give them instructions, emphasizing these:
 - Only copy & paste emails, **do not forward** them
 - Send a test email **before you leave the country** (make sure VIPs receive it, ie your parents, campus staff, and OneLink staff)
 - It is imperative to send out each weekly team email **within 24hrs max** of receiving them
 - Direct all inquiries to campus ministry staff, or OneLink if they cannot be reached - **do not give out the overseas partner or the team's contact info**
 - OneLink Office: 316-201-3231
- Proofreading is primarily your responsibility, but they can help be a second “Gate” to help you.

Proofreading

- Protect the Hosts - **No names, no photos, no specifics**
 - Unless Hosts explicitly say differently (i.e. in more open countries), we want you to blur or not include photos of them or their children
- Protect your friends
 - **Use pseudonyms** (i.e. PR for my new friend Bob)
 - **No photos of national friends** (back of heads, blurred faces, or don't include)
 - **DO** take photos of and with friends that you can share when you come home
- Check for place identifiers
 - Stick with regions & code names for cities (i.e. River City in SEA)
 - Photos - think critically if location identifiers are okay. Ask your Host if you aren't sure.
- Be kind to parents - nothing too crazy or too graphic that will increase worry (see above explanation)
- Words NOT to Use / **Words TO USE Instead:**
 - Mission Trip / **Cultural Exchange, Language School/Study**
 - Missionaries / **Workers, Hosts, Field Partner**
 - IMB / **The company**
 - Christians / **C's, family, brothers, sisters**
 - Pray or Prayer / **PR, think, remember, yarp**
 - Evangelism / **Sharing, telling, EV**
 - Jesus / **Son, Older Brother, J**
 - Holy Spirit / **HS, Counselor**
 - Church / **Community, Club**
 - Devil, Satan / **Enemy**
 - Bible / **Good Book, Word**
 - Baptism / **Dunking, swimming**
 - God / **CEO, Boss, Father**

Final Note:

- **Do not forget to send a brief "safe arrival" email as soon as possible after you land!**
 - You will be exhausted & overwhelmed and can easily forget this step
 - A photo & short note is fine "We have arrived at our destination safely"
 - It might be easiest to ask your Host to send a message to your Stateside Gatekeeper & campus ministry staff for you.