The Art of Letter Writing with CBTV Live

Chapter 1 - Chapter 1
The Art Of Letter Writing
^(upbeat music) - Hey, everybody and welcome to Creativebug. We're coming at you live like we always do on Tuesdays and Thursdays which means you can write in and ask us questions. This week we're following Sonia Phillip in the studio and she'll be with you live on Thursday so come back for that. Today, I thought I'd share some of my most favorite things about sending and receiving mail. It doesn't matter if you don't have perfect handwriting, you're not a hand letterer or you're not even an artist per se, I have got lots of tips and tricks up my sleeve to show you some really easy ways to send mail and make your envelopes really pretty, some information about postage stamps and other good things. We've got a lot of awesome classes already on Creativebug that complement this really well, so if you are curious about calligraphy or lettering, use the code Joann1, that will give you one month free of Creative But and 30% off at joann.com to get your supplies for sending some awesome mail art. I'm gonna try to go in clockwise order so I don't forget anything because there's so many fun things. The first thing I want to say is like the easiest thing to do is send a postcard and I have this image that I've been kind of toting around from desk to desk and inspiration to inspiration area. This is a designer who worked for Merra Meko, which is like a famous fashion house of fabric design. His name is Katsugi Wakisaki and over his lifetime, he sent 10,000 postcards to his wife. And so I always had this up because I thought I want to meet a man who's gonna send me 10,000 postcards. Then I decided I'm gonna be the person that sends 10,000 postcards. There's no reason why I can't be that person. So I send a lot of postcards to a lot of friends. I've definitely shown you guys that on other live shoots. And postcards can be anything really, 4 by 6 and 5 by 7, just cardstock will work to make your postcard. I wanted to show you a couple of postcards I have here. A lot of vintage photos have been turned into postcards. This is from Russia 1913 and if you did come across a vintage photo that is not a postcard, you can easily draw your own lines just with a ruler or used something called Letter Mate, which is something I was gonna show you. This is a handy, dandy letter envelope addressing guide that has these really cool rule marks on it and I'm gonna show you how to use this on an envelope a little bit later, but something like this can allow you to turn any piece of paper into a postcard. So we'll come back to our Letter Mate. I also have a postcard from a show that I had. This was at Legion. A lot of places, museums and galleries have little free postcards that you can take and you can still send these. There's no reason that you couldn't just write in the margins and add an address and a postage stamp. This most recent postcard is from the Andrew Weiss show at the Seattle Art Museum and this is just your standard postcard. And if you are sending a postcard, you need to use a postcard stamp. You can use a regular postage stamp, but you might as well saving a couple of cents using a postcard stamp. This is the current postcard stamp and they're kind of these Charlie Harper style birds, but when you go to your post office, ask for a postcard stamp because you can save a little bit and they're often fun designs. I also have some seashells that are also postcards. So this is good to know. The other thing you want to think about if you're sending a letter are the different sizes of envelopes. The smallest envelope that you can send is called a four-bar envelope, that's the size. There are things like A2, A6, A7, that's like a 5 by 7. There are also air mail envelopes and these are great if you're sending international mail, but I love the way these look so I often use them for domestic mail, too. This is the same as a standard business envelope and a lot of places will make an

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envelope that's the same size, but it feels fancier because it has a different kind of lapel and the lapel is the part that comes off the back of an envelope, so that's what this is called. And if you've seen some of my other live shoots where I've shown you how to make envelope liners, you use he lapel for determining how to make your liner. So I love this because it has a horizontal orientation. And I was looking online. I found two really funny things that are kind of from the Victorian era when letter writing and love letters were at their heyday. These are some tips for addressing mail. Make sure you write and print legibly. Use zone numbers where applicable, that's a little more contemporary. Include your return address. This is true if you are dropping off a piece of mail at the post office, they will not accept it without your return address. Use air mail and special delivery for extra speed. So we talked about the postcard stamps. I also wanted to show you that if you are sending something abroad, my best friend lives in France right now and so this is the postage stamp that I use for her. This is a global postage stamp and it's also a forever stamp, which means even if you pay let's say 80% for this stamp now, but in 10 years, it's a $1.80, you can still use this postage stamp because it's forever. And then mark the envelope, use hand stamp when object is enclosed. So if you're doing a wax seal or you have a puffy thing inside of your envelope, it does have to be hand canceled. That usually requires extra postage. These are all good things to keep in mind and I want to tell you a little bit more about postage stamps. I'm gonna put this here so I don't forget. I've got a couple of easy ideas for addressing envelopes. I wanted to start with these black envelopes. A lot of people ask like how do you write on a dark envelope. So this might be a red envelope or a black envelope, something like a dark gray and my favorite things to use are the Jelly Roll Moonlight pens. If you didn't know, Secura of America also just came out with new white Jelly Rolls in different sizes and they have their size on the top of the cap here. So this is an 08 size, so I have the originals and then I have some of the new sizes. And these pens are awesome. I just want to make sure it's going the right way because they will write on dark paper. You want to go slow to maximize the ink flow and you can go over also. And as they start to dry, they will get darker. So on the black ink, sorry on the black envelope, you can still get really fine detail using these pens and some real vibrant color, which is awesome. I'm gonna go over this, it looks like the other pen was drying out. So even if you don't consider yourself like a doodler or a drawers, these little asterisks are so easy to make and they look really cute scattered around on an envelope. The white pen also works really nicely. Here's our white Jelly Roll pen. If I want to fill in that star, I can. - [Liana] Hey, Courtney, can you tell is what are the finish on the dark envelopes and cards. Joanna wants to know. - Joanna is asking what is the finish on the dark envelope and these are just regular paper, but they're black, which means you have to use a specialty pen to show up, right. You can't use a black or a blue pen because it won't show up on the envelope. I'm using these Jelly Roll markers or pens that you can get at your local Joann store. This is the moonlight edition. You want to make sure that you're getting the Moonlight or the white so that it shows up. That's still wet, so it's not going over that. But like I said, even if you're not someone who considers themselves super artistic, you can even make a really cute envelope just by doing little stars like that. Here's another. - [Liana] Can you tell Crystal why does it need more postage with a wax seal. - Christa's asking, I mentioned earlier that if you have something that's puffy or uses a wax seal it needs more postage and that's because it cannot go through an automatic sorter, needs to be hand canceled and the post office does require more postage for that, so check with your local post office. Here's another envelope that I did using the same Jelly Roll Moonlight markers and I've done some floral designs. And here is one that I did for my friend Mia. I'm gonna send this off. This is one of those business size envelopes, but it has a side orientation and I did this one like a mobile and we'll put a stamp on this and I made some

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accompanying letterhead. So this is super easy, again I'm just drawing a shape, like it's not a technical skill, I'm not drawing a face or something and my little asterisks here, so I still have to write her a letter. And we're talking about different papers that you can use. Of course you can buy letter sets which are really fun. You can find little sets of coordinated stationary with envelopes, you can of course just use regular typing paper. I'm currently in love with this Strathmore writing paper. If you've seen any of my monoprint classes or even some of my painting classes, I really love the Strathmore drawing paper and the writing paper is very similar. It's a little bit lighter in weight, super affordable for this pad. This one happens to have lines on it. You can also get it unlined like this and it's really, really nice and while we have these out, why don't we test some of my favorite pens as well. So I've got a Pentel sign pen. This one makes a really kind of marker tip mark and it will kind of soften as you use it. This is a classic pen. I also really like this Zebra. This is from the office supply store and it's a traditional ballpoint, so it's a thinner line. You can of course use your Jelly Roll markers or pens in the same way. This one happens to be a metallic one. Writing the word minimum is really fun. It's fun to do all your loops and letters. And you can also use just blank paper, like I did with my friend Mia, so I did that little shape here. That was with my Pentel sign pen and then I came in here with my Jelly Roll marker. This is just my normal handwriting. So I like the way it looks, but sometimes it's a little illegible. And you can play with different shapes. Sometimes creating a shape will allow you to kind of draw right up to the edges and form your letter forms around a shape that you've given yourself as a bounding box, so that's something to consider. Oh, I also want to show you two other types of pens. So this is a little set, a Speedball set of nib dip pens that I picked up and I also picked up another pen that I'm just storing in here. You can buy calligraphy pens that have a blunt edge. This one is a fountain pen so the cartridge of ink is actually inside the pen. Let me show you what this looks like. So there's a cartridge of ink. This one's already open because I've been using it, so be careful, it's a little bit splashy. In most of these fountain pens you press until you feel kind of a click or a bit of resistance. That means that the ink has been engaged. The other ink is actually in here in this particular one, so this one has not been engaged yet. This cruise, which is really, really nice, especially for traveling and it has like a chisel tip. So if I press down, I get a thick line and I can also get a thin line and these pens can be fun because they change your handwriting, even if you're not doing traditional calligraphy. So if I write my name or hello it's different than if I were to write it just with a pen, right. So when I'm using something like this the Pentel sign pen, everything is about the same thickness. When I'm using one of these calligraphy pens, I get both the thick and thin line just from the nature of the tip. And like I said, I don't often use these to write with, but I love making marks with them. They're super fun so you can play with adding little motifs to your letters or to your envelopes. - [Liana] Courtney, can you remind us of the name of the pad that you are writing on? - Yeah, people are asking what kind of pad and I working on and I'm using a Strathmore writing pad. You can get them blank like this one or you can get them with lines on it which I also really like. It also just depends. And for envelopes, I was gonna show you the Letter Mates. - [Liana] One more question about envelopes. Where can people find black envelopes. Ooh, black envelopes. Actually at your local Joann, you should be able to find all different color of envelopes and cards. These usually come in sets and not individual envelopes. I picked these up at my local art supply store, which is Arch. You can also go to paper source. I really love their paper colors. The quality of their paper is really nice. They also have black. You can also look for like midnight is a really pretty color. If you're writing on anything that's metallic, you have to use a permanent pen, something like a micron or even a paint marker might be the best because a lot of that metallic paper will absorb your ink and it will kind of disappear as it dries, so that's something

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to keep in mind. So for something like this where you're working on a black envelope, this Letter Mate is really handy because it's this little guide and you can kind of slide it around to find, you know, the framing that you like. I'm gonna do this one to my parents. So I'm not actually drawing lines, although you can do that. Mom and dad, easy peasy. And then I might do their address there or I would do their address here. So I'm not going right to the line, but having the line is keeping me together and just kind of in organization because otherwise, you don't want to like draw all this beautiful stuff and then have these wonky sort of irregular lines unless that's your intention. And then I actually like to use the edge of this to kind of play with lining up motifs, so you can do something like that. Those are just dashes and dots. I'm actually gonna turn this upside down since my ink is still wet. I don't want to smear it, especially on my beautiful envelope. So you can do things like that. I now you can write things like please deliver to. So I think that's so pretty and using the Letter Mate really helps things kind of stay organized and look good. You want to leave room for your postage stamp, although you can put your postage stamp anywhere. If you're thinking about your return address and your addressee's address, you want to make sure that the one you're sending it to is bigger or is very clearly marked because if you have two large addresses on the envelope and your postage stamp is in kind of an irregular place, then you may wind up sending the letter back to yourself. I often will write my return address on the back lapel because I like the way that looks, so you could also use your letter made for this. I'm just free handing it. And you can play with doing large return zip codes here. That's another fun way to address your envelope. If you've seen Mikayla's creative lettering class on Creativebug, she's got some great ideas for using your lettering in interesting ways, changing your scale, mixing up your cursive with your print, so take a look at the lettering class that Mikayla teaches on Creativebug. Using the code Joann1, you can watch that and get a free month of Creativebug. So that's one thing to do. And then when you're thinking about your postage stamps, I have a ton of postage stamps here. Remember I said I have the global postage stamp. For this I'm not gonna use that. I do love these forever love stamps. As we approach Valentine's Day, I think having all of this in your back pocket on how to write and address really lovely letters, a nice thanks, and this is a great postage stamp to go with it. Let's see. I might use, these ones are actually cool. This is a little bit cold, so I'm not sure I can get these to work, but these were some postage stamp that came out right before the eclipse and they're heat sensitive, so they're black right now, but if you hold it for a really long time or if it's in the sun, you actually see the moon behind it. I'm not sure I'm gonna be able to do it because my hands are cold. (blowing) You can kind of see. I need a heat tool. So actually check your local post office, because this is something I didn't know had come out and then when I went to my post office I just asked them like what are the stamps you have right now and they had these awesome heat sensitive stamps. I was like okay, yes, I have to have those. - [Liana] It blew my mind eariler. - I know, I showed Liana with the heat gun and it was pretty amazing because there was like a full picture of the moon behind this. It's too cold in here, though. I should have had some hot tea to put onto it. These beautiful Andrew Wyatt stamps just came out. I can also use older postage stamps. This is a 34 and the postage has gone up since then, but I can start with this stamp and then I can even put the stamps sideways because I wrote please deliver to very high. I can fill up the rest of this top part of my envelope with one or two cent stamps to accommodate. So if you don't even have the right postage, you can go to your post office of just have a sheet or 1 or 2 cent stamps and add those. Sometimes it's really fun to compose your entire envelope with different styles of stamps and you can also use vintage stamps as long as they haven't been canceled. And you can also buy vintage stamps online at their face value, you don't have to pay extra for the, which is pretty awesome. I'm

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just gonna also show you, let's see. I love the idea of kind of transforming your envelope and you can incorporate your stamp into that. So I have these really cool snowy day stamps that just came out this year because it was the anniversary of the Ezra Jack Keats, the snowy day and what's so cool about these stamps is that they have this little guy, the little character from the snowy day. It'd be really fun to maybe use this stamp and continue his footprints onto the envelope. Let's see, I like this stamp so why don't we place that here. And then I can just continue the snowy line like he's coming down the hill. So traditionally your postage stamp would go on the upper right, but you can actually put it anywhere that you want on the envelope and then I can address either in here or in here. Maybe I want to do some more little critters. Maybe there's like a little tree here. And my snowy landscape. So it's really fun to think about incorporating your postage stamp and have that as a jumping off point for your envelope design. While I'm thinking about it, I'll also show you this an envelope technique from my playing with surface design class and this could not be easier. If you've ever seen the abstract painting class that we have on Creativebug that I teach, this is the credit card painting method and it's very, very easy to do. I'm gonna use a piece of scrap paper. So this is my test sheet. And all you need, I need a credit card. - [Liana] Ooh, I have one. - Which Liana might have. And a bit of acrylic paint. Thanks lady. You can use your leftover Joann gift card if you have one or your Starbucks card or what have you. Okay, so you just need the tiniest amount of acrylic paint in your chosen color. And then using a library card or a gift card, you can just slide that paint right onto the surface of your envelope. And you can play with the different designs. You can make, you can even do something where your return address would go and what's cool about this is that you're applying such a thin layer of paint that this dries pretty quickly and also it doesn't ruin your pen if you're gonna write over it. A lot of paint if you were to write onto it with like a ball point pen or some kind of marker pen, it would ruin the tip of your pen. I might also do some on the back here. So you can play with that and that's a technique from the abstract painting class such as a credit card painting. You can watch some of our other mixed media classes and you've probably seen that technique before. Of course I have my handy dandy baby wipe because I have paint on my hand. Let me show you some other envelopes that use that technique. Here's one where I did some just acrylic craft paint in blue and then using my Jelly Rolls in silver, I drew in the blue and then off into the white. Let me show you some others. Here's another one just using that same pink paint and then I had that little chisel tip calligraphy pen that I was telling you about, just to make little marks. It's just fun to add some texture. I'm not drawing anything specifically, but the way that they're groped make it look a little bit like flowers or plants. Or just little hash marks. And these little textures are just so fun. Think about just going to your mailbox every day. The one that I, one of the things that I dislike about being an adult is most of my mail, although I actually do get a lot of fun mail, there's still a lot of bills and other non-fun things, like right now I'm getting all of my tax stuff as you probably are, too, so maybe it's a nice time to sit down and write a note to a friend of just appreciation, maybe a thank you, reach out to someone that you haven't seen in a long time, you can send a postcard. I often keep postcards in my backpack with postage stamps, always with postage stamps, so that if I'm waiting in a cafe or something for a friend or just waiting for my meal, I often will write a postcard and then just pop it in the mail when I pass a mailbox. Just a nice way to say hello and tell someone you're thinking of them. Here's another, oh, I showed you this one, this is the white on the black. Here's another one I did using Perma-Pake markers which are also from Secura. They're some of my favorite paint pens. They're water based, but they don't smell funny and they dry really quickly. They have really vibrant color and that's what I used here. Let me show you. I'm running out of envelopes you guys. So you can just play with abstract shapes. So you can see

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how bright and vibrant and kind of matte that is. They're much cooler than a regular marker. I really love them. And they have two points. They have a chisel point and a fine point. And you can see like the pink went right over the page because of this paint like surface, which is really awesome. So you can even sit down and do a whole little set of envelopes like this and just have them be ready and you can make custom stationary just with regular pieces of paper to coordinate. They even work on dark envelopes so here's a dark blue envelope that I used, the silver and red Perma-Pake and you can see like still how well you can see that pattern, which is really fun. I can't wait to send this one. Here's another one where I just used that little calligraphy marker I was showing you and then added the Perma-Pake with red in the center. This is, I think we did this last year. I had this sitting on my desk because I love this hand, this is using the Perma-Pake marker, too, on craft paper. Often a lot of things won't show up really nicely on craft paper, but this is the blue Perma-Pake and then I used my Jelly Rolls in white and pink to add these adornments for the hand, which I think is really fun. And this will be a really cute envelope, too, like if you drew this on the top of an envelope and then the address in here, that would be awesome. This is a little tester. I was using my nib pen and just did a bunch of loops. If you've seen Mabel Imasastucal's class, she has a lot of ideas for using your practice sheets and you can actually practice on envelopes and then use those to send and you could color on top of this to create a space to write an address in here. So you can start combining your techniques and that can be really fun. - [Liannna] Dana wants to know do the Perma-Pakes bleed. - Hi, Dana, good question. She's asking me, do Perma-Pakes bleed through. Actually no, they're not like a normal permanent marker like a Sharpie or something that does bleed onto the other side. If you were to really like aggravate the paper like over and over and over, it might start to peel a little or pill and you may bet some bleed through, but no, they sit really on the surface, but they get a lot of color. They're better than any other paint marker I've ever used. I really love them and they're water based and don't smell weird or stinky or anything. So they're awesome, they're one of my favorite go tos. In fact, we have our artists sign the wall in our studio and this is the marker that we're using to sign the wall, which is pretty fun. I wanted to show you one more thing I think before we go. There's so many things to show you. Oh, I have two more things to show you. So I don't have a letter just yet, but I'm gonna write a letter. But I want to show you this kind of traditional method of folding a letter that can also double as your envelope. So take any sheet of paper, this works for any size and put it horizontal or landscape orientation and you're gonna fold it in half and then take each edge and fold it into that center fold. If you can eyeball, you don't actually have to do that first fold, but you're trying to get this lined up as best you can, so we've got this. It's called a gate fold actually. And then you're just gonna, I don't know, do this about a third. This part you can definitely eyeball. And then you're gonna bring this portion up and they don't have to be touching exactly and we're gonna scoot this part into here to kind of seal off our letter, but to make it a little bit easier, I actually like to just fold in these corners and then this gets tipped into here or tucked in rather. And you want it to be nice and snug, so it'll be snug at first, you just got to maneuver it. And you get this tidy little package and you can actually, if it's big enough, you want to make sure that you're working larger than a four bar size. You can actually address this and send this whole thing as both letter and envelope. Or you can just use it as your letter. Here's one where I wrote open me. So the letter's tucked inside. I think this would be so cute for Valentine's day and this is a good way to like include some confetti or maybe a photo or some little tiny bit of a femora because this is totally encased and sealed. But it's super easy. You don't need any glue or tape. So that's a great way to go. And my last pitch for creating artwork for your mail art is actually carving your own rubber stamp. We have two or three really great classes on carving your own rubber

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stamps. I wanted something really simple so I could write the address over. I carved an I on this side and a mouth on this side. You can see I was drawing some ballpoint pen marks and then carved it away. So I just wanted to show you want that looked like. Maybe, I think I'm gonna do the eye, just going face down into my ink. Make sure that I've got a good covering of ink. You can see that to see if it's shiny. Yeah. It's so fun and I can use this as a jumping off point, too, if I wanted to embellish further. This is so fun. We have a social sketch tonight and I'll probably just wind up doing mail art the entire time just because this is so fun. Sometimes I feel like I should say postal art because every time I say mail art, people think I'm talking about male as in man as in masculine. - [Liana] Dude art? - Dude art, when I'm talking about postal mail, y'all. So you could just like play with this, so fun. I don't even want to stop. And how cool would it be to get this in the mail. I would be super thrilled to get this in the mail. I'm just using that calligraphy nib to make these markings. Do my thick side. And my thin side. You can look up the Creativebug address online and send me some mail. I'll send you some back, just saying. Phil has sent us a postcard, it was lovely, thank you Phil if you're watching today. Those were just a few ideas. There are no excuses for not having perfect handwriting or not being a true artist and not being able to draw something because there's so many things that you can do to decorate your envelopes, to write personal letters. Oh, there's one more thing. I found this online and I thought it was hilarious. Postage stamp flirtation. Apparently there is a guide on where you place your postage stamp. So let's see, I wonder if upper left, says what it is. So top corner at the right is I wish you friendship. That's your traditional place for a postage stamp. Bottom corner at left I seek your acquaintance. Online with surname, please accept my love. The same, but upside down, I'm engaged. Upside down in the left corner is I love you, so you would put your postage stamp upside down here. Same corner crosswise, my heart is another's. Straight up and down means goodbye sweetheart and in the middle at the right hand edge, write immediately and top center, yes. Opposite at bottom no. So if you place it here, it means no. Right hand corner, we have that left hand corner, oh, no, this means I hate you. How tragic for me. Hopefully whoever I'm sending this to does not also have the postage stamp flirtation guide. I think this is pretty adorable, so I don't think it means that I hate anybody. But you can find lots of really interesting things at the library about Victorian letter writing, so if that is a curiosity for you, then please do look into it further. I think the 10,000 postcards is a great goal to have for one's life. I think I'm gonna try to do that. I think I've probably sent about 300 right now, so I still have a ways to go. If you're new to Creativebug and you want some more lettering ideas, check out Mikayla's classes or Mabel Imasastucal's classes. She has some amazing calligraphy classes on Creativebug. You can use the code Joann1 to get one month free for Creativebug and 30% off all your fun supplies at joann.com. And there are so many ideas on Creativebug and so many more in our live shoots. We do this live every Tuesday and Thursday and on Thursday Sonia Phillip will be joining Faith Hale showing you some of the fun stuff they've been making in the studio this week. We'll see you then. ^(upbeat music)

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