

Pestalozzi International (5) Pen Pals

Foundation House / Elementary
(Classes 5-7)



Pestalozzi's Influence (Pestalozzi Approach)

Part 1

The facilitator asks the participants to recall in which countries there are Pestalozzi students and explains that each student is to exchange a letter with a Pestalozzi International student being educated in a different country. Each student can choose to exchange letters with a student from the country of his or her choice.

The facilitator notes down the nationality, age, gender and level of English of each student and, in consultation with the Pestalozzi International office, UK, finds a suitable pen pal for each student.

Part 2

The facilitator elicits the contents of the letter given below from the students and writes the points on the board.

Instructions to Participants:

- Have your name and address at the top of the letter
- Give an introduction including your age, where you live and where you study
- Include information about your family
- Include information about your school
- Include information about the different Pestalozzi International activities you are involved in
- Outline your interests and hobbies and your likes and dislikes
- Write what you hope to do in the future
- Request your pen pal to reply with similar information

The facilitator gives each of the participants the name and address of the pen pal chosen for him or her, a piece of paper and an envelope and the students write their letters. (NB: Depending on the school, the letters could be sent by e-mail to the appropriate co-ordinator of the Pestalozzi International students, or in some cases directly between students.)

(NB: The facilitator explains to the students that, after the initial introductory letter, students continue the exchange of letters in their own time.)

Materials Needed

- A sheet of paper for each student
- Either access to e-mail or envelopes and stamps, as appropriate (see below)





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Pestalozzi believed that any kind of charitable giving is useless unless because it makes the recipient even more dependent, unless that gift is in the form of an education which enables a person to help himself or herself and in turn others. He provided a vocational education, teaching the practical skills most likely to be useful and relevant to his students upon becoming adults. He taught students the skills necessary for independence and believed that students should take control of their learning to as great an extent as possible.

Notes:

Please encourage students to use the **Golden rules** before proceeding with AI tools - use this as an opportunity to discuss staying safe online.

Modernising the Pestalozzi Pen Pal Activity

Core Principle (important for facilitators)

Technology is used to:

- Support thinking (Head)
- Build relationships and empathy (Heart)
- Create, communicate, and reflect (Hands)
- AI is positioned as a helper, not a replacement for student's voices.

1. Before the Exchange: Building Digital Curiosity

Digital Research & Mapping (IT Skills)

- Students use Google Maps / digital globes to locate their pen pal's country.
- Simple research tasks:
- Flag, language, school life, climate
- Create a shared digital map or slideshow of all partner countries.

Skills developed:

Searching safely, evaluating information, digital geography, collaboration.

- AI as a Thinking Partner (AI Literacy)
- Students ask AI child-friendly prompts such as:
- "What questions could I ask a students my age in [x country]?"
- "How do children in other countries go to school?"

Facilitator explicitly explains:

"AI gives ideas, but you choose what sounds right for you."

Skills developed:

- Prompting, critical thinking, decision-making.



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Notes:

2. Writing the Letter: Blended Digital & Personal

Drafting with Technology

Students:

- Draft letters in a word processor or shared document
- Use:
- Spellcheck and grammar suggestions
- Text-to-speech to hear their writing aloud
- Dictation tools for accessibility

Optional AI support:

- Ask AI to:
- Simplify sentences
- Suggest alternative words
- Check tone (friendly, polite)

Key rule: AI edits with the child, never for the child.

Choice of Format (Modern Pen Pals)

Offer options:

- Email letter
- Typed letter + handwritten signature
- Digital postcard
- Short introductory video or voice message (with safeguarding in place)

Skills developed:

Digital communication, media creation, online etiquette.

3. Beyond Letters: Creative, Tech-Based Exchange

Multimedia Sharing

Students can exchange:

- Photos of school life (approved by facilitator)
- Short videos: “A day in my school”
- Audio recordings: reading a paragraph aloud
- Digital drawings or posters

Tools: tablets, presentation software, simple video tools.

Collaborative Digital Projects

Pen pals work on:

- A shared online slideshow
- A joint digital book: “Our Lives Around the World”
- A simple blog or class page (teacher-moderated)

Skills developed:

Collaboration, digital citizenship, creativity.

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Notes:

4. Reflection: Making Learning Visible

AI-Supported Reflection

After receiving replies, students use prompts such as:

- “What is similar and different about our lives?”
- “What surprised me?”
- “What did I learn about another culture?”

AI can help:

- Turn notes into reflection sentences
- Generate discussion questions
- Support students with limited writing skills

Digital Portfolios

Students collect:

- Letters
- Media exchanges
- Reflections

Saved in a digital learning journal or portfolio linked to Pestalozzi values.

5. Explicit Teaching of AI & Digital Ethics

Make it age-appropriate and explicit:

- What AI is (and isn't)
- Why we don't copy everything it says
- How to stay safe online
- Respectful digital communication

This aligns strongly with Pestalozzi's moral education.

AI Reminders:



Knowledge - AI is not always factually accurate. It's important to check outputs.



Time - AI should be helping us save time give yourself a time-frame to complete tasks in.



Accuracy - Use AI to as a tool but not as a replacement. Remember AI is not human and not always trustworthy.



Unique - Remember you bring your unique experiences and knowledge to the world. Use AI to assist you but make sure it enhances your work and does not lose your unique voice/message.



Safety - It is best practice not to share any private information with AI, whether your own or others. Including - addresses, passwords, email addresses, conversations etc.