

# Ask Secretary Clinton to Prioritize Child Marriage!

## Why are we asking Secretary Clinton to prioritize child marriage?

Child marriage is a human rights violation. It prevents more than 10 million girls a year from being able to reach their full potential and makes it harder for families, communities, and countries to escape poverty. Child brides are more likely to drop out of school, contract HIV, experience domestic violence and die in child birth. We need action and investment from our government so we can reach vulnerable girls as quickly as possible. With Sec. Clinton's help, we can work together to end child marriage!

## What can I do to help?

In honor of the first International Day of the Girl on Oct. 10, write a letter to Sec. Clinton asking her to prioritize child marriage. Get all of the materials you need – a piece of paper, a pen or pencil, an envelope and a stamp – and send your letter to the Girl Up offices by Sept. 15. Girl Up will deliver your letter to Sec. Clinton before the International Day of the Girl.

## How do I get started?

Secretary Clinton gets hundreds of letters every day – but every one of them counts. Read the tips below to help your letter stand out and make an impact, and then begin writing your letter by following the template at the end of this guide:

- **Introduce Yourself.** List your “credentials” (name, address, school) and specify that you are a Girl Up constituent. As you introduce yourself, don't forget to include why you feel strongly about helping adolescent girls around the world.
- **Personalize it.** Sending a personalized letter will generate more attention than an impersonal form letter. Be creative – your elected officials want to hear your stories, not just facts and figures.
- **Be concise.** Get to the point... quickly. Your letter should be a maximum of one page. The more concise, the better. There are so many important things to say, but letters that are too long risk not being fully read. Use the talking points at the end of this guide to help you be brief.
- **Make an “ask.”** Be sure your letter includes a clear call-to-action. Ask Sec. Clinton to political and financial support for ending child marriage. For emphasis, restate your “ask” at the end of the letter.
- **Be polite.** Manners do go a long way. Advocates should be passionate, not pushy. Remember to thank Sec. Clinton for her leadership on women and girls' issues.

If you want a response, keep in mind that your letter must include your name and mailing address, even if you are using email. You should address your letter using the headings provided with template at the end of this guide.

## Want to make a bigger impact? Host a letter writing party!

You can double or triple your impact by hosting a letter writing party. Invite a few friends over, or plan a letter writing party at your next club meeting. At the beginning of the party, give a brief overview of the issue and the “ask”—with time for people to ask questions! Be sure to include supplies for everyone to write their own personal letters, as well as copies of the letter template. Make it a true party by providing food like cupcakes or pizza.

Let Girl Up know if you are hosting a letter writing party by emailing us at [info@girlup.org](mailto:info@girlup.org). We may be able to supply you with envelopes and stamps!

**Don't forget to mail your letter to Girl Up by Sept. 15!**

**Girl Up c/o Julie Willig**  
1800 Massachusetts Ave.  
Washington, DC 20036

# Letter Template

The Honorable Secretary of State Hillary Clinton  
US Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,

## *Paragraph 1: Introduction*

Introduce yourself by stating your name, age and hometown, and introduce Girl Up and your involvement with us. Include a brief, 1-sentence summary of why you are writing the letter.

## *Paragraph 2: Child Marriage – Making the case*

In this paragraph, you should be addressing *why* child marriage matters to you. Provide 2-3 sentences about why you think child marriage is an important issue to address and why you are passionate about helping adolescent girls around the world. Be sure to include some facts or a story of a girl that you find shocking. For example, 1 in 7 girls in developing countries will be married before the age of 15. For more facts and information on child marriage, visit [GirlUp.org/childmarriage](http://GirlUp.org/childmarriage).

## *Paragraph 3: Making the “ask”*

In this paragraph, you should address *how* you want the State Department and Sec. Clinton to help. State that you want increased political and financial commitments so that we can work to end child marriage. The time to tackle this issue is now! Ask Sec. Clinton to prioritize child marriage on her agenda. It is important to note that addressing child marriage will help achieve other developmental goals because it is linked with so many other global issues (i.e. education, poverty, health, safety). The Senate demonstrated a commitment to the issue by passing the Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act; now we need to see our government take action. Make sure you say “please”!

## *Paragraph 4: Personal touch*

Here is where you can really be creative! What have you done with your Girl Up club to raise awareness about child marriage? How did you react when you heard about child marriage? How did you feel when the Senate passed the International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act? Is there a particular story you’ve heard about a girl being married at a young age that has affected you? Is there an article or book you read on child marriage that shocked you? Make this paragraph unique to you.

## *Paragraph 5: Conclusion and thank you*

Wrap up your letter by reiterating your “ask” (be sure to include “please”) and briefly stating the importance of addressing the issue of child marriage. Be sure to thank Sec. Clinton for her time and her leadership on empowering girls and women around the world.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Your First & Last Name]

[Address]

[Phone Number]