

Love letters and break-up letters

What is it?

Participants are asked to write to a building or a service instead of a person, either expressing their admiration or ending things! One of the advantages of this technique is that it's familiar and easily understood. It's supposed to be light-hearted but that doesn't make it any less useful, as the resulting letters can offer insights into the places people visit and the services they use. However, some groups of people might see it as too playful or inappropriate, so it isn't suitable for all situations.



Things you need

- Willing participants - large groups and also entries through social media work well
- A pen and paper for everyone taking part (or flip-chart paper and post-it notes for a quicker activity)



How to do it

1. The idea of the love letter and the break-up letter are well known culturally, so you probably won't need to offer much guidance. Ask your participant/s to 'Write a love letter or a break-up letter to...', followed by the name of the building, service or whatever else you want people's feelings about. Don't specify which one they should write; it's up to them depending on how they feel.
2. You don't have to be in the same place as your participant for this activity so it works especially well through social media, such as Instagram and Twitter. If you are there in person, give them plenty of space to write their letter so they don't feel scrutinised while they're doing it.
3. If you've got a larger group of participants or want to make this a shorter activity, label pieces of flip-chart paper with 'Love notes' and 'Break-up notes', give people pens and post-it notes, and ask them to add as many notes as they like to either or both.
4. After the session, look through the letters or notes and make a list of common themes, both positive and negative. The love letters are great because they show what people like, but the break-up letters are even more useful. They may confirm known problems with buildings, services or other things, or may reveal new issues. If the findings do show something that people dislike or find difficult, make any improvements you can. There's also the option of using other user experience methodologies to find out more.

