



# Getting Started—Fundraising

## What we have learned

Through our experience, donors contribute because:

- they know and want to support you
- your connection with SADS resonates with them
- they are amazed by your fundraising efforts or the event you're tackling
- they can see the direct impact their donation makes

The first step in your fundraising is to write your personal appeal letter. By far, this is the most successful fundraising strategy. You'll be surprised how much people want you to succeed, especially those you're close to and who know you. This letter can be used in a shorter version on your firstgiving.com web page.

Email through firstgiving.com may get caught by a spam filter, so the strategy that seems to work best is to put your initial letter on paper and send it through the mail. Plus with "snail mail" you have the opportunity to put in a self addressed stamped envelope, which we know from long experience increases the rate of response significantly.

Many of the people on your contact list are great with e-mail. Direct them to your page on firstgiving.com in your letter. Let them know that they can learn more about SADS and the CLIMP to CONQUER SADS from this web page. They can also see your progress on reaching your goal.

## The letter (or email):

1. ***Make sure it's personal.*** Convey your enthusiasm for the Climb using words you would use.
  - Why are you fundraising? (e.g. in memory or honor of someone. Be sure and tell their story and add a photo.)
  - Why is this cause important to you?
  - What impact will each donation make? (e.g. pick out a SADS Foundation program or two that particularly appeal to you. for more information about programs: [www.StopSADS.org](http://www.StopSADS.org).)
  - Look at the samples, we've provided, but be sure to say what you would say. You're writing to people who know you, so sound like yourself, and let people know that this is important to you.
2. ***Talk about your goal.*** It is a good thing to state how much you're hoping to raise and to aim high. Donors want to see their friend succeed. In fact, some will donate again if they know their friend is close to their goal.



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3. **Ask.** Be sure to tell people what you are asking them to do: to support your commitment to the SADS Foundation by making a donation. And ask that they donate by a specific time. The vast majority of people you contact will want to support you. Setting a target date will help them translate their desire to help into action.
4. **Provide instructions for making a donation.** Ask them to send a check (made out to the Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes Foundation or SADS Foundation, indicating your name and Climb 2009 somewhere on the check) in the enclosed envelope, or go to your personal webpage at [firstgiving.com](http://firstgiving.com)
5. **Follow up.** Keep track of your donations on your 'firstgiving page' as they come in (and whom you've heard from).

Be sure to send thank you notes or cards to your donors as they make their donations and send them a receipt. Express your thanks to everyone who donates, no matter how much or little they give. If they donate through [firstgiving.com](http://firstgiving.com) they automatically get an email "thank you" message. There is a space on your page to write this "thank you" so that is personal, coming from you.

## Ideas for Contacts

**People You Know.** Your major resource is the people you know. Friends, family, coworkers - people you know who are willing to help you. The length of your list will vary depending on your circumstances. The amount they give will depend on their situation, but give everyone close to you a chance to contribute to your efforts. You can also ask for their help in introducing you to others whom they know that can help you.

**Associations and Organizations.** Organizations you belong to may be a good source of people who will help you. Service clubs, religious, labor and professional organizations are possibilities.

**Customers and Vendors.** Depending on the business you are in, you may have relationships with customers and vendors that can prove useful. Be sure to clear this with your employer first though.

**Corporations.** Corporations do give a lot of money to charitable causes. However, corporations do get asked frequently and usually have complex systems and policies regarding their giving. If you have a way of making it more personal then your chances improve. If you have or can develop a personal relationship with someone in the corporation who can effectively make the decision to contribute to your efforts, then that is well worth pursuing. **Please contact the SADS Foundation before you contact corporations in order to ensure that other fundraisers have not already contacted them.**

**Matching Gifts.** Many companies match the gifts their employees make to charitable organizations, and some match the donations their employees raise as well. Also be sure to ask your donors to check with their employers. Human Resources offices are usually the place to go for information.



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