

**Dr. Ruth Westheimer Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2024**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

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Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms023018>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2024

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Dr. Ruth Westheimer Papers

**Inclusive Dates:** 1977-1990

**Bulk Dates:** 1982-1986

**ID No.:** MSS86577

**Creator:** Westheimer, Ruth K. (Ruth Karola), 1928-2024

**Extent:** 17,325 items

**Extent:** 50 containers

**Extent:** 19.8 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2023086577>

**Summary:** Sex therapist, talk show host, author, and educator. Correspondence, publicity packets, and show notes related to Westheimer's radio and television shows in the 1980s. Primarily letters from Westheimer's audience relating their questions and concerns to the talk show therapist.

## Acquisition Information

The papers of Ruth Westheimer were given to the Library of Congress by Westheimer in 2023.

## Processing History

The papers of Ruth Westheimer were arranged and described by Katherine S. Madison with the assistance of Miles Lawlor and Kimberly Owens in 2023-2024. During processing, original listener letters that met certain criteria were removed to a "Closed" series; redacted copies remain in the open portion of the collection. Redacted information includes only names, addresses, phone numbers, and other personally identifiable information.

## Transfers

Audiotapes have been transferred to the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center (NAVCC) where they are identified as part of the Dr. Ruth Westheimer Papers. Patrons are encouraged to contact NAVCC in advance of a research visit.

## Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Ruth Westheimer in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

## Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for information concerning these restrictions. In addition, many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Dr. Ruth Westheimer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

Date	Event
1928, June 4	Born Karola Ruth Siegel in Wiesenfeld (Karlstadt am Main), Germany
1939	Sent to Heiden, Switzerland, on a Kindertransport
1945	Immigrated to British Mandate Palestine
1948	Served with the Haganah in the Arab-Israeli War
1950	Married first husband (divorced circa 1955) Moved to France
1952-1956	Studied psychology at the Université de Paris (Sorbonne)
1956	Immigrated to the United States
1957	Married second husband (divorced circa 1958) Birth of daughter Miriam Westheimer
1959	M.A., sociology, New School for Social Research, New York, N.Y.
1961	Married Manfred Westheimer (died 1997)
1963	Birth of son Joel Westheimer
1965	Naturalized as U.S. citizen
1967-circa 1970	Worked for Planned Parenthood of Greater New York
1970	Ed.D., family-life studies, Teachers College of Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
circa 1977	Certificate, psychosexual therapy, Cornell University Medical College (under Helen Singer Kaplan)
1980-1990	Host, <i>Sexually Speaking</i> , WYNY-FM (NBC) Radio
1983	Published <i>Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex</i> . New York: Warner Books
1984-1991	Host, <i>Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer</i> and other related programs, Lifetime Television Network
1985	Published <i>First Love: A Young People's Guide to Sexual Information</i> . New York: Warner Books Released <i>Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex</i> . Victory Games Released <i>Terrific Sex: The Dr. Ruth Video</i> . Warner Video
1986	Premiere of "Ask Dr. Ruth" newspaper advice column
1987	Published <i>All in a Lifetime</i> . New York: Warner Books (re-released 2001)
2024, July 12	Died, New York, N.Y.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Ruth Westheimer span the years 1977-1990, with the bulk of the material dating from 1982 to 1986. The papers document the early career of Westheimer as a radio and television talk show host under the moniker "Dr. Ruth." The collection is organized into three series: [Listener Letters](#), [Sexually Speaking Production Files](#), and [Closed](#).

Westheimer began her public career as a media personality and talk show sex therapist with the New York City NBC-affiliate WYNY-FM in 1980. Her radio talk show, *Sexually Speaking*, was nationally syndicated by NBC Radio in 1984. Westheimer's television show, *Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer*, premiered on the Lifetime Television Network in 1984. The collection documents this early media career largely through the lens of letters sent from listeners and viewers of her various programs and talk show appearances, as well as via select production files from NBC Radio and WYNY.

The collection's series are listed and briefly described below. A fuller description of each series and a list of its contents can be accessed in the series descriptions within the container list.

The [Listener Letters](#) series contains letters sent to Dr. Ruth Westheimer in the 1980s, largely from listeners of her syndicated WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show *Sexually Speaking* and viewers of her Lifetime Television talk show *Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer*.

The [Sexually Speaking Production Files](#) document several behind-the-scenes aspects of Westheimer's WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show and media career, largely focused on the period 1982-1985.

The remaining series contains [Closed](#) material.

## Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged in three series:

- [Listener Letters, 1980-1987](#)
- [Sexually Speaking Production Files, 1977-1990](#)
- [Closed, 1980-1987](#)

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Westheimer, Ruth K. (Ruth Karola), 1928-2024 Dr. Ruth's guide to good sex. 1983.

Westheimer, Ruth K. (Ruth Karola), 1928-2024.

### Subjects

Adultery.

Contraception.

Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex (Game)

Female orgasm.

Gender identity.

Human anatomy.

Interpersonal relations.

Male orgasm.

Radio talk shows--United States.

Sex instruction.

Sex.

Sexual health.

Sexual orientation.

Television talk shows--United States.

### Titles

*Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer (Television talk show)*

*Ruth K. Westheimer papers.*

*Sexually Speaking (Radio program)*

### Occupations

Authors.

Educators.

Talk show hosts.

Therapists.

## Description of Series

**Container**  
BOX 1-37

**Series**  
**Listener Letters, 1980-1987**

The Listener Letters series contains letters sent to Dr. Ruth Westheimer in the 1980s, largely from listeners of her syndicated WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show *Sexually Speaking* and viewers of her Lifetime Television talk show *Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer*. Additional letters in this series were sent in by readers of her first book, *Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex* (New York: Warner Books, 1983) and in response to her many appearances on television talk shows such as the *Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, *Late Night with David Letterman*, and the *Phil Donahue Show*. Several 1982 letters were sent in to the television studios of WNYW/Channel 5 in New York City, where Westheimer briefly hosted a local daytime talk show.

The majority of the letter writers requested advice from Westheimer in her role as a sex therapist and media personality; some letters convey complaints and others request autographs, photographs, or memorabilia. Common topics include contraceptive use, male and female orgasm and anatomy, sexual health, sexual orientation/identity, infidelity, and relationship problems. Early letters, from 1981 to 1984, typically include a brief summary of their central question on the envelope or on a sticky note, likely written by WYNY staff. Beginning in mid-1986, most letters received were compiled into numbered envelopes accompanied by an index containing a summary and, if known, the age, sex, marital status, and location (by state) of the letter writer.

The series is divided into two parts: "letters received," which contains letters mailed to Westheimer, and "letters with responses," which contains letters mailed to Westheimer plus her reply to the letter writer. Copies of various unpersonalized form letters returned to letter writers (circa 1982 and circa 1986) can be found in the *Sexually Speaking* Production Files series.

Arranged chronologically, in two parts. A span of "letters received" in 1986-1987 were indexed into numbered folders, and that arrangement is maintained.

BOX 37-38

**Sexually Speaking Production Files, 1977-1990**

The *Sexually Speaking* Production Files document several behind-the-scenes aspects of Westheimer's WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show and her media career, largely focused on the period 1982-1985. Prominent in the series are weekly show notes from *Sexually Speaking* producers (1982-1983) as well as promotional material from both WYNY and NBC Radio Entertainment. Also included are audience questions collected during an April 1982 appearance on *Late Night with David Letterman* on NBC Television. A few folders of material relate to other aspects of Westheimer's media career in the 1980s, including promotional material for her 1985 board game, *Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex*.

Material types include press releases and publicity packets, show notes and schedules, memoranda and letters, and forms.

Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.

BOX X 39-X 50

**Closed, 1980-1987**

Material types include correspondence.

Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were separated.

# Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-37	<p><b>Listener Letters, 1980-1987</b></p> <p>The Listener Letters series contains letters sent to Dr. Ruth Westheimer in the 1980s, largely from listeners of her syndicated WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show <i>Sexually Speaking</i> and viewers of her Lifetime Television talk show <i>Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer</i>. Additional letters in this series were sent in by readers of her first book, <i>Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex</i> (New York: Warner Books, 1983) and in response to her many appearances on television talk shows such as the <i>Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson</i>, <i>Late Night with David Letterman</i>, and the <i>Phil Donahue Show</i>. Several 1982 letters were sent in to the television studios of WNYW/Channel 5 in New York City, where Westheimer briefly hosted a local daytime talk show.</p> <p>The majority of the letter writers requested advice from Westheimer in her role as a sex therapist and media personality; some letters convey complaints and others request autographs, photographs, or memorabilia. Common topics include contraceptive use, male and female orgasm and anatomy, sexual health, sexual orientation/identity, infidelity, and relationship problems. Early letters, from 1981 to 1984, typically include a brief summary of their central question on the envelope or on a sticky note, likely written by WYNY staff. Beginning in mid-1986, most letters received were compiled into numbered envelopes accompanied by an index containing a summary and, if known, the age, sex, marital status, and location (by state) of the letter writer.</p> <p>The series is divided into two parts: "letters received," which contains letters mailed to Westheimer, and "letters with responses," which contains letters mailed to Westheimer plus her reply to the letter writer. Copies of various unpersonalized form letters returned to letter writers (circa 1982 and circa 1986) can be found in the <i>Sexually Speaking</i> Production Files series.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically, in two parts. A span of "letters received" in 1986-1987 were indexed into numbered folders, and that arrangement is maintained.</p>
BOX 1	Letters received
BOX 1	1980-1981, Dec. (12 folders)
BOX 2	circa 1981-circa 1982 (12 folders)
BOX 3	1982, Jan.-1982, Mar. (11 folders)
BOX 4	1982, Mar.-1982, June (11 folders)
BOX 5	1982, June-1982, Nov. (12 folders)
BOX 6	1982, Dec.-1983, Feb. (14 folders)
BOX 7	1983, Feb.-1984, Jan. (16 folders)
BOX 8	1984, Feb.-1984, Sept. (13 folders)
BOX 9	1984, Sept.-1984, Oct. (12 folders)

## Listener Letters, 1980-1987

Container	Contents
BOX 10	1984, Oct.-1985, Jan. (14 folders)
BOX 11	1985, Feb.-1985, June (14 folders)
BOX 12	1985, June-1985, Aug. (13 folders)
BOX 13	1985, Sept.-1985, Dec. (12 folders)
BOX 14	1985, Dec.-1986, Feb. (15 folders)
BOX 15	1986, Mar.-1986, May (13 folders)
BOX 16	1986, May-1986, Aug. (12 folders)
BOX 17	1986, Aug.-1986, Oct. (9 folders)
BOX 18	1986, Oct.-1986, Nov. (10 folders)
BOX 19	1986, Nov. (9 folders)
BOX 20	1986, Dec.-1987, Jan. (9 folders)
BOX 21	1987, Jan. (9 folders)
BOX 22	1987, Jan.-1987, Feb. (9 folders)
BOX 23	1987, Jan.-1987, Feb. (8 folders)
BOX 24	1987, Jan.-1987, Feb. (8 folders)
BOX 25	1987, Feb.-1987, Mar. (8 folders)
BOX 26	1987, Feb.-1987, Mar. (8 folders)
BOX 27	1987, Mar.-1987 Apr.
BOX 27	Undated (4 folders)
BOX 27	Letters with responses
BOX 27	1982, Apr.-1982, May (7 folders)
BOX 27	1982, July-1982, Aug. (3 folders)
BOX 28	1982, Oct.-1982, Dec. (13 folders)
BOX 29	1982, Dec.-1983, Mar. (14 folders)
BOX 30	1983, Mar.-1983, June (13 folders)

## Listener Letters, 1980-1987

Container	Contents
BOX 31	1983, June-1983, Aug. (12 folders)
BOX 32	1983, Sept.-1983, Nov. (13 folders)
BOX 33	1983, Dec.-1984, Jan. (13 folders)
BOX 34	1984, Jan.-1984, Mar. (12 folders)
BOX 35	1984, Mar. (12 folders)
BOX 36	1984, Apr.-1984, June (12 folders)
BOX 37	1984, June-1984, Sept. (8 folders)
BOX 37	circa 1984
BOX 37	Undated
BOX 37-38	<b><i>Sexually Speaking</i> Production Files, 1977-1990</b> The <i>Sexually Speaking</i> Production Files document several behind-the-scenes aspects of Westheimer's WYNY-FM (NBC) radio show and her media career, largely focused on the period 1982-1985. Prominent in the series are weekly show notes from <i>Sexually Speaking</i> producers (1982-1983) as well as promotional material from both WYNY and NBC Radio Entertainment. Also included are audience questions collected during an April 1982 appearance on <i>Late Night with David Letterman</i> on NBC Television. A few folders of material relate to other aspects of Westheimer's media career in the 1980s, including promotional material for her 1985 board game, Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex. Material types include press releases and publicity packets, show notes and schedules, memoranda and letters, and forms. Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.
BOX 37	"Ask Dr. Ruth" questions, circa 1986
BOX 37	Audience questions, 1981-circa 1983, undated
BOX 37	"Between Us" segment, undated
BOX 38	China trip thank-you letters, 1986
BOX 38	Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex promotional material, 1985
BOX 38	Form letters, circa 1982, circa 1986, undated
BOX 38	<i>Late Night with David Letterman</i> (NBC) appearance audience questions, 1982
BOX 38	Miscellany, 1977, 1982, 1985, undated
BOX 38	NBC Radio Entertainment promotional material, 1985-1986
BOX 38	New York Market Radio (NYMRAD) ascertainment list, 1985
BOX 38	Party guest list, 1982
BOX 38	Show notes, 1982-1983 (3 folders)
BOX 38	Statistics, undated
BOX 38	<i>This Morning</i> (ITV) audience questions, 1990
BOX 38	T-shirt giveaway, 1982
BOX 38	WYNY promotional material, circa 1985
BOX 38	WYNY promotional material, background information on Dr. Ruth Westheimer, circa 1984



## ***Sexually Speaking Production Files, 1977-1990***

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
BOX 38	WYNY special weekend programming listener survey report, undated
BOX X 39-X 50	<b>Closed, 1980-1987</b> Material types include correspondence. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were separated.
	Listener Letters, letters received
BOX X 39	1980-1982, May (14 folders)
BOX X 40	1982, June-1984, July (22 folders)
BOX X 41	1984, Aug.-1985, June (12 folders)
BOX X 42	1985, July-1986, May (12 folders)
BOX X 43	1986, June-1987, Jan. (38 folders)
BOX X 44	1987, Jan.-1987, Mar. (37 folders)
BOX X 45	1987, Feb.-1987, Apr. (12 folders)
BOX X 45	Undated
	Listener Letters, letters with responses
BOX X 45	1982, Apr.-1982, Nov. (6 folders)
BOX X 46	1982, Dec.-1983, Mar. (9 folders)
BOX X 47	1983, Apr.-1983, Aug. (8 folders)
BOX X 48	1983, Sept.-1984, Jan. (9 folders)
BOX X 49	1984, Feb.-1984, Apr. (7 folders)
BOX X 50	1984, May-1984, Sept. (4 folders)
BOX X 50	circa 1984