

How to Write a Letter of Apology

A guide to the structure of your letter, with example sentences.

No, don't use AI.

When things are written with AI, Judges can tell. AI hasn't gotten good enough to sound quite like a real human yet. Whenever you go for the easy way out, you end up paying twice the price. Humans don't all sound the same, **but Artificial Intelligence does.**

I know you think that this letter needs to sound amazing, **but it doesn't.**

It doesn't need to sound professional,
it doesn't need to sound fancy,
it doesn't need to sound like Shakespeare.

The **most effective apology letters** I have ever seen were ones written by a person with their own voice, with their own vocabulary, from their own mind.

So **write from the heart** and don't worry about it sounding like someone's PhD. The more you try to sound like someone that isn't you, the more a Judge will be able to tell.

Handwriting the letter is a great move, if you would like to do that.

HOW TO SET OUT YOUR LETTER

At the top, write **"To the Presiding Judge"**, then just start the letter. Work through the sections below in order. The example sentences show the kind of thing to say; fill in the blanks in your own words.

01 Reason for writing

Make a statement about your concern for everyone's feelings about the offence(s). For example:

- I am writing to you because I am feeling _____ about how I have treated you.
- I am writing to you because I am feeling _____ about you and _____ about what I have put you through.

02 Statement of apology

Give clear and specific details of the offence and the harm caused. For example:

- I am deeply sorry for _____.
- I want to apologise for _____.

03 Statement of responsibility

Make a statement about who is responsible for what happened. For example:

- I know I am fully responsible for what happened and my actions that day. I should not have _____ because _____.
- I know _____ (co-offender's name, if appropriate) and I are responsible for what happened that day. I know I am accountable for my actions and the choices I made that day. We should not have _____ because _____.

04 Understanding of the impact on others

Write about what you have learnt about how the offence has impacted people. For example:

- I am starting to realise some of what I have put you through. It must have been _____ when _____.
- I must have frightened you _____.
- I betrayed you by _____.

05 What you are doing to change your behaviour

Let the people you are writing to know what you are doing to change your behaviour, so that you do not get into trouble again. For example:

- I am seeing a counsellor so that I can make sure that nothing like this will happen again. I have learnt _____.
- I am learning to understand what I have put you through, and I am working out what I need to do so I do not get into the same situation again. I know I should _____.

06 Statement about distancing

Let people know that you are not coming back to hurt them again. For example:

- I will stay away from your home/shop and your family/staff, as I do not want to cause any of you any further hurt.

07 Facing the consequences

Write about your readiness and ability to face the consequences. For example:

- I know I must take responsibility for my actions. I know that I have committed a criminal offence as well as betraying you. I am ready to handle whatever consequences I will have to face from you, my family, the community, and the Police/Court.

08 Future intentions

Let the people you are writing to know about your goals and plans for the future. For example:

- I am turning my life around and I am now _____ (list what you are doing, e.g. getting counselling, looking for a job, started a job or traineeship, back at school).
- Since the conference I have _____.
- If I see you or your family members, I will be respectful.
- I believe that you have every right to feel angry and betrayed.
- I am not asking you to forgive me. I just want you to know that I am really sorry for what I did to you.

SAMPLE LETTER

Do not plagiarise this letter – the Judge will know. Use it only to see how a letter can be set out, then write your own in your own words.

To the Presiding Magistrate,

I am writing to you because I am feeling very bad and very embarrassed, as I am a family person. I am a father of two young children, aged 4 and 3.

It is very hard to absorb my offence. I will not use the stress of work as an excuse for my poor decision to drive when I knew I was suspended by the police. I also feel terrible about how I have treated the people on the road. I am writing to you with sincerity.

I am very sorry for what I have done. As a self-employed concreter, I have caused myself and my family to lose the most important privilege of driving. Running a concreting business, I am required to drive to job sites every day and to carry my tools with me. The loss of my licence is devastating, but as a person who experienced these devastating consequences many years ago, I should have known better. I want to apologise for what I have done, and I am stressed thinking about how I could be so irresponsible. It is very hard for me, my family and society to go through this situation.

I am seeing a counsellor so that I can make sure that nothing like this will happen again. I have learned in the Traffic Offenders Intervention Program (TOIP) that my overall driving behaviour, especially speeding, exposed members of the public and other road users to a serious risk of harm. Having completed the program, I have reflected deeply and can promise that my driving will change when I am able to get my licence back.

I accept that there must be consequences for my actions and understand that I will be disqualified from driving today. I know my family and work will suffer because of my actions, but I will improve and be a responsible husband, father, son and friend.

I am turning my life around, and I am now getting counselling from one of my good friends and relying on other employees to help me get to and from work. I am saddened that I have also left my wife with the complete responsibility for driving at home.

I believe that everyone in the community has a right to feel angry and betrayed. I am not asking you to forgive me. I just want you to know that I am sorry for what I did.

Yours sincerely,

Your name – the date