

Guide - How to Write Reference Letter

You have been asked to supply a character reference for a sentence in the Magistrates Court. Character references assist the court to see beyond the charges and support the person who is pleading guilty.

The reference letter should demonstrate how well you know the person you are writing on behalf of, and your view of them.

Formality

The letter will be given to the Magistrate to read, so it should be in a particular format. A letter in support needs to be:

- ✓ Addressed to "To the Presiding Magistrate"
- ✓ Typed
- ✓ Signed in pen and dated
- ✓ State that you are aware of the charges before the court

Contents

The contents of the personal reference should assist the court in understanding the person's character and personal circumstances as you have seen. The letter could contain some of the following points:

- ? If they have shown remorse, how?
- ? To your knowledge, the details of their background.
- ? How long you have known them and in what capacity?
Any contributions to the community or any assistance the person is offered you personally.
- ? The consequence the offending is had on the person you're writing the reference letter for.
Do you believe the offences were out of character, and why?

To make sure your letter has the most impact, avoid the following easy mistakes to make:

- ✗ Suggest the court show leniency, not send the person to prison/record a conviction or make any particular decision.
- ✗ Do not try to excuse their behavior or give the court reasons why they should not be punished.

If you have any questions or would like someone to look over your reference before you sign and send it, we are more than happy to review it for you.