



Letter of Apology / Remorse

Writing a letter of remorse/apology for sentencing

Remorse can be seen as a deep regret and repentance for a wrong committed. Letters of remorse can be tendered to the court at your sentencing to show the court you have insight into your behaviour and its impact on others.

How to write a letter of remorse

Before writing your letter of remorse, be cautious to show the remorse it not just self-pity, or a self-centred determination to put the offending in the past and move on.

When writing a letter of remorse or apology, in addition to the other formalities such as types, dated, signed and addressed to the "Presiding Magistrate (if in the Magistrates Court) or "Presiding Judge" (in the Supreme or District Courts) consider the following:

- Take full responsibility, do not try and defend your actions or shift blame elsewhere. The first instinct may be to explain the reasoning or forces behind the behaviour, resist these temptations as it reduces the authenticity of your letter;
- Think about who has suffered as a consequence of your behaviour, consider how they may feel and what they may be going through as a result. Talk about how it makes you feel to know you have caused this; and
- Outline any steps you have taken or intend to take to address the harm caused.

However, you should **always supply a draft to your lawyer**. It is important that you have the first attempt at writing a letter of remorse, as having a lawyer write the letter the first time will come off as being obviously written by a lawyer (lessening the genuine nature of the letter).

It can be tempting to attempt to demonstrate remorse through discussing how the offending has seen a period of incarceration, loss of employment, removal from family or otherwise negative impacts on your circumstances.

The impact of the offending on you *should not be* addressed in the letter of remorse. Instead, the letter should focus on who has been hurt, insight into how the actions have adversely impacted them, and how you feel to know they have caused other people harm or injury by your behaviour.