

Character Letter Instructions

Thank you so much for being willing to write a character letter! It is so important to have letters from relatives, friends, co-workers, former teachers, and others who have insight and information to share. Your letter may be of great importance in helping obtain a fair and just outcome for the case.

If you have any questions at all, do not hesitate to reach out to Jill Bucaro at 937-671-3306 or Jill_Bucaro@fd.org

ADDRESSING & STARTING YOUR LETTER

Your letter should be addressed to:

Honorable Judge _____
C/O Jill Bucaro, Mitigation Specialist
Federal Public Defender, Southern District of Ohio
1 South Main Street, Suite 490
Dayton, OH 45402

The letter must be easily readable, and typed letters are preferred. You can email it to Jill at Jill_Bucaro@fd.org, text it to Jill at 937-671-3306, or mail it to the address above addressed to Jill (Federal Public Defender, Southern District of Ohio, 1 South Main Street, Suite 490, Dayton, OH 45402). Although your letter is addressed to the Judge, it should be sent to the Public Defender's Office & Jill, **NOT** the Judge's address.

When you start the actual letter, say "Dear Honorable Judge _____," or just "Honorable Judge _____,"

IDENTIFYING YOURSELF

The best character or reference letters often begin by saying who the writer of the letter is and what he or she does. You should also explain how long and under what circumstances you have known our client.

- What is your relationship?
- How well do you feel you know him/her?
- Why are they important to you?
- Why did you take the time to write this letter?

SHARE THE FACTS ABOUT OUR CLIENT

Next, please tell us your honest thoughts about the person's character. Some of the areas that you may want to discuss are listed below:

- Is he/she/they a thoughtful person?
- Do you know of any kindness they have shown toward others?
- Do they have good relationships with their family and friends?
- What are examples of the kindness they have shown to others or ways in which they have helped their family or friends?
- Do you feel that they will be a productive member of society after this case is over?
- Do you feel that they have learned from their actions in this case?
- Do you believe that this offense is out of character for them or has to do with some problem or traumatic event in their life?
- Do you think it is unlikely they will violate the law in the future?

DO NOT IGNORE THE FACT A CRIME WAS COMMITTED

There is no need to ignore the fact that they have been charged with a crime. Rather, if you believe their character is basically good despite your hearing of a charge against them, then say this! If they have said they are guilty and sorry for their mistake, you can say that too.

CONCLUSION

Please end the letter with a "From," Thank you for your consideration," or something similar. Please include your full name, number, email address, and (if possible) a physical work or home address.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

All the above suggestions are very general. Please feel free to make your letter unique and specific to your relationship with our client. In our experience, letters are the most compelling when you share an opinion of them, but also explain why you hold that opinion through a short story or something you have observed about their character or interactions with others. It is can also be often very helpful to include an example of some praiseworthy incident or conduct by our client that you have witnessed or heard of to show a different side of them outside of this case.

PICTURES

Pictures can be so helpful in showing the Judge who our client is outside of the courtroom. Please include any good pictures you have of our client by emailing, texting, or mailing copies.