

The ACCOUNTABILITY LETTER BANK – Writing Guide



This guide is intended to help you write the most meaningful letter to the victim or victim’s family. Writing an accountability letter is an important step in accepting full responsibility for harm you have caused and can assist with the victim’s healing. Below is a sample framework to help you get started. While we provide suggested phrases you are welcome to use, you do not have to. This is your letter, and you are encouraged to write the letter in your words and in whatever style feels natural to you.

Sample Letter Framework

Framework:	Examples: <i>Write your own words and sentences here as practice. You can then use them to write your letter.</i>
Dear _____,	<i>Use victim’s name and correct spelling if you know it.</i>
Why are you writing?	<i>“I am writing to take full responsibility for my actions on _____ that caused you and _____ (if others) harm. I am writing you this letter to apologize.”</i>
Acknowledge wrongdoing. What was the crime you committed? Explain what you did and how are you responsible for the incident.	<i>“I committed _____ against you and am fully responsible for the choices I made to _____.”</i>
Offer a genuine apology.	<i>“I am sorry for _____.”</i>

<p>Express regret. Why are you sorry for your actions? How do you feel about the harm caused?</p>	<p><i>“I am sorry because _____.”</i></p> <p><i>After reflecting on my actions, I feel _____ about what happened and how you were impacted.”</i></p>
<p>Talk about what you are doing to better yourself. Think about classes or programs you have taken and why they were meaningful for you to make positive changes.</p>	<p><i>“I recently completed a course called _____. Through this course, I learned _____. This will help me in my future by making better decisions such as _____.”</i></p>
<p>Commit to Change. What has changed for you now? What steps are you taking to make sure this won’t happen again?</p>	<p><i>“In thinking back on my behavior, I now realize _____.</i></p> <p><i>I am committed to making positive changes in my life such as _____.”</i></p>
<p>Sign and date your letter.</p>	<p><i>Sincerely,</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____, 2025</p>

Once you have filled in the above sections, you are ready to write your accountability letter. You are encouraged to use this guide as a starting point for your letter and add other meaningful information if you’d like. Do not submit this form as your letter, it is for your practice only.

Helpful Hints for Writing Your Letter

- ❖ **Make sure that your handwriting is legible.** If your handwriting is difficult to read, consider printing the letter.
- ❖ **The letter does not need to be long.** A 1–2-page letter is just fine.
- ❖ **Do not preach your religious beliefs.** It may be appropriate to tell the victim that your faith is helping you to change your life, but it is not appropriate to try to force your beliefs on the victim.
- ❖ **Ask for help with writing your letter.** If you are struggling, ask a trusted friend, chaplain, or corrections staff person to assist.
- ❖ **Put your draft letter aside for a while.** Some people have found working on the letter a little at a time makes it easier to write.
- ❖ **Write each victim their own letter.** For letters written to a victim’s family, it is acceptable to address the letter, “Dear family of _____,”
- ❖ **Do not ask the victim for forgiveness.** If you expect forgiveness, you are writing the letter for your own benefit, not the victim’s. Asking the victim to forgive you places the responsibility on the victim to meet your needs.
- ❖ **Don’t make excuses for your behavior or place blame on external factors or circumstances.** Take responsibility for the actions and choices you made.

Questions To Consider Before Writing Your Letter:

- ❖ **Are you ready?** Have you accepted full responsibility for your crime and the harm caused? The process of writing this letter may help you become more honest about yourself and your intentions.
- ❖ **Are you writing this letter for any other reason than to assist the victim with their healing and for your own personal growth and insight?**
- ❖ **Do you blame the victim, others, or your circumstances for the crime?** If so, you are not ready to submit a letter.

It is recommended that you submit your draft letter to your treatment provider or classification counselor for input prior to submitting it to the Letter Bank