

A character letter to a judge before sentencing is a written document that provides testimony about an individual's character and personal qualities as they pertain to their case. It is written by someone who has personally had the opportunity to observe the individual's character and behavior and can provide insight into their personality and conduct. The letter is intended to be used as evidence in court and may be submitted as part of the individual's defense after they have been found guilty.

When considering character letters, judges may look at factors such as the writer's relationship to the defendant, the writer's credibility, and the content of the letter. They may also consider the overall tone and tenor of the letter, as well as any specific examples or anecdotes provided. Character letters are just one factor that a judge may consider when deciding on a sentence, and they are not the sole determinant of the outcome.

## **What is the Goal of a Character Letter to the Judge Before Sentencing?**

Depending on the jurisdiction, a judge has leeway when deciding what the penalty should be for a guilty person's crime. By writing about the person's positive qualities and any relevant experiences that demonstrate their good character, the writer hopes to persuade the judge to be more lenient in its sentencing decision.

A character letter to a judge before sentencing may be written by a friend, family member, or colleague of the individual, and may be submitted as part of their defense before sentencing. It may be used in conjunction with other evidence, such as testimony from witnesses or documentation of the individual's accomplishments or community service.

## Sample Sections to Include

When writing a character letter to a judge before sentencing, it is important to include several key sections:

- Introduce the writer and explain their relationship to the individual.
- State the purpose of the letter, which is to provide character testimony on behalf of the individual.
- Describe the writer's personal observations of the individual's character and any positive qualities they have observed.
- Describe any relevant experiences the writer has had with the individual that demonstrate their good character.
- Summarize the writer's thoughts on the individual's character and a request for leniency in the court's decision.

## Examples that Demonstrate Character

When describing the character of the person you are writing the character letter for, it is important to tell the judge about specific experiences. These examples should be events in the past when the person acted in a positive way.

Here are a few sample anecdotes you can read to give you ideas. You should not use these samples. The anecdotes should be used purely as a starting point to give you ideas about what events to include in your letter.

- "For example, I remember one time when she saw a stray dog that had been hit by a car. She immediately stopped to help, and even took the dog to the vet to get treated. This selfless act really spoke to her caring

and compassionate nature.”

- “I remember one time when he was working on a project with me, and we made a mistake that could have been costly for our company. Instead of trying to cover it up or blame someone else, he immediately owned up to the mistake and worked with me to fix it. This honesty really impressed me.”
- “For example, I remember this time when we were working on a tight deadline, and she stayed late every night to make sure we met it. Her dedication and hard work really impressed me and made a big difference in the success of our project.”
- “One time, I saw him go out of his way to help a stranger who had been in an accident. He stayed with the person until help arrived and made sure they were comfortable and safe.”
- “For example, when we were working on a big project, he took charge and really rallied the team. They were able to get everyone on board and working together, and the project was a success because of his leadership.”

## **Character Letter to Judge Before Sentencing Samples**

A template for a character letter to a judge before sentencing is a pre-formatted document that provides a structure for writing a letter to a judge in support of a person who is being sentenced. You can use it as a sample when writing your own letter. The two templates below provide suggestions on tone, language, and verbiage to use in the letter. Be sure to change the placeholders in [brackets] to suit your needs. The second template is a more flexible version with more placeholders for customization.

# Sample Letter: To Judge Before Sentencing

[Your Name]

[Your Street Address]

[Your City, State Zip]

[Your Phone Number]

[Your Email]

[Date]

[Judge's Name]

[Court's Name]

[Your Street Address]

[Your City, State Zip]

Dear [Judge's Name],

I am writing to you today to advocate for the character of [Name], whom I have known for [Number] years. I have seen firsthand the positive impact that [Name] has had on those around them, and I believe that they have the potential to continue making a positive difference in the world.

[Name] has always been a kind and compassionate individual, with a sense of empathy and understanding. They have a deep sense of right and wrong, and have always strived to do what is just and fair.

In my opinion, [Name] is a valuable member of our community and has much to offer society. [He/She] has a strong work ethic and have consistently demonstrated their ability to take responsibility for their actions.

I understand that [Name] has made mistakes and understands the gravity of their actions. However, I believe that they have learned from their mistakes and are ready to move forward in a positive direction. I have every confidence that, given the opportunity, [Name] will make the most of it and will work hard to become a productive and contributing member of

society.

I urge you to consider the character of [Name] and the potential for rehabilitation when making your decision regarding sentencing. [Name] has much to offer, and I believe that they deserve a second chance.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

[Your Name]

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## **Sample Letter: To Judge Before Sentencing (Flexible Template)**

[Your Name]

[Your Street Address]

[Your City, State Zip]

[Your Phone Number]

[Your Email]

[Date]

[Judge's Name]

[Court's Name]

[Your Street Address]

[Your City, State Zip]

Dear [Judge's Name],

I am writing to you today to provide a character witness statement on behalf of [Name]. I have known [Name] for [Number] years, and in that time, I have come to know them as a [Positive Character Trait 1], [Positive Character Trait 2],

and [Positive Character Trait 3] individual.

Some specific examples of [Name]'s character include [Instance 1], [Instance 2], and [Instance 3]. These instances demonstrate [Name]'s [Responsibility/Reliability/Integrity], and are indicative of the type of person that [Name] is.

[Name] has always had [Positive Goal/Aspiration], and their character and values align with these goals. They have always been [Action 1] and [Action 2] towards achieving their goals, and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so in the future.

I also have knowledge of [Name]'s relationships with others, including their family, friends, and colleagues. These relationships reflect [Name]'s character as a [Positive Character Trait 4] and [Positive Character Trait 5] person, and I believe that [Name] is well-respected by those around them.

In addition to their personal character, [Name] has also been involved in [Community Service/Leadership Experience]. This demonstrates their commitment to making a positive impact on the people around them and their willingness to contribute to their community.

I hope that this letter helps to provide some insight into the character of [Name] and that it will be taken into consideration as you make your sentencing decision.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

[Your Name]