



"An apology is an act of honesty, generosity, humility, courage and commitment."

Professor Aaron Lazare

Writing a letter of apology can be a challenging task. You can feel very vulnerable when apologising for harms caused.

It is important to be brave and consider offering a genuine apology, regardless of whether it will be accepted or not.

The purpose of this document is to help you think about how you might structure a letter or a verbal apology and the way you might express yourself in it.

An apology should attempt to meet the basic needs of a victim:

- Power,
- Truth,
- Validation
- Shared suffering.

A full apology contains:

- Admitting responsibility for the behaviour and outcomes
- Acknowledging the harm done and that it was wrong
- Expressing regret or remorse for the harm done
- Offering to repair the harm or make amends
- Demonstrating what you are or will do to ensure that there is not a repeat of the behaviour again in the future.

Format

Think about whether you should write more than one letter to individual people affected by your actions or address the letter to multiple recipients.

Ensure that you spell the recipient's name/s correctly.

Date and sign the letter.



Opening

Consider making a statement about why you are writing the letter.

Examples:

- Dear John, I am writing to you because I am feeling _____ about how I treated you on 14 January 2019.
- Dear Sarah, I am writing to you because I am feeling _____ about you and _____ about what I have put you through.
- Dear Timothy, I want to apologise for my actions on 10 March 2019. I understand that they not only affected you but your wife and family as well.
- Dear Mary, I am writing to you about the offence that I committed on 15 December 2018.

Confession / Apology

Give clear and specific details of the offence and harm caused and apologise.

Examples:

- I am very sorry for _____.
- I want to apologise for _____.
- On 14 March 2019 I _____. My behaviour was unacceptable.
- I committed a crime of _____ against you. I am sorry for hurting you.

Responsibility / Explanation

Make a statement about who is responsible for what happened and provide an explanation for your behavior.

Examples:

- I know that I am fully responsible for what happened and my actions that day.
- I should not have _____ because _____.
- I know _____ (co-offenders names if appropriate) and I are responsible for what happened that day.
- I know I am accountable for my actions and the choices I made that day.
- We should not have _____ because _____.
- I _____ on that day because _____.
- It was not your fault. It was mine.



Insight

Put yourself into the shoes of the other person and think about what it would have felt like/been like for them.

Demonstrate that you have thought about them and understand the impact of your actions for them and others.

Write about what you have learnt about how the offence has impacted people.

Examples:

- You must have felt _____ when I _____ and for that I am truly sorry.
- I am starting to realise some of what I have put you through.
- It must have been _____ when _____.
- I betrayed you by _____.
- You have every right to feel _____.

Consequences / Shame / Remorse

Write about your readiness and ability to face consequences.

Examples:

- I know I must take responsibility for my actions.
- I know that I have committed a criminal offence.
- I am ready to handle whatever consequences that I will have to face.
- I am ashamed of my actions on 14 July 2019.
- Since that night I have felt sick.
- I am disappointed in myself for _____.

Make Reparations

Set out the actions you will take to make amends to those who you wronged.

Examples:

- I would like to offer you _____ as restitution.
- I have donated _____ to _____ for future victims.
- In addition to my written apology I would like to _____.



Changes

Set out what you are going to do or what you have already done to change your behavior.

Examples:

- I am seeing a psychologist so that I can make sure that nothing like this will happen again.
- I have learnt _____.
- I am learning to understand what I have put you through and I am working out what I need to do so that I do not get into the same situation again.
- I accept that I have a problem _____ and I am taking steps to _____.
- I am turning my life around and I am now _____.
- We have changed our policy on _____ so that the risk of this occurring again will be reduced.
- I am going to work at being a better person.

Distance

Depending on the situation some people might want to know that you will not have contact with them or attempt to contact them in the future.

Examples:

- I will stay away from _____ (person/place)
- I will not cause you any further hurt.
- If I see you or your family members I will be respectful and not approach you or them.