

South East Community Legal Service Inc.

9 Penola Road
Mount Gambier SA 5290



Tips for an effective character reference to accompany a simple guilty plea

A character reference is a statement made by a person with a good reputation in the community who knows you. A character reference can help show that you are an honest person, or it can help the court understand your situation. For example, a character reference can help show that you were acting out of the ordinary when you allegedly committed an offence.

Who should you ask to provide a character reference?

Examples of people to ask to provide character references include:

- Former or current teachers
- Former or current employers
- Religious leaders
- Neighbours
- Anyone who has helped you in a counselling or rehabilitation program

If you have undertaken a rehabilitation program, you can ask your parents or friends to write a character reference if they have noticed a change in your attitudes, addictions or behaviour as a result of rehabilitation.

When you ask someone to provide a reference, make sure you tell them about the charges you are facing.

What should the character reference include?

The character reference should include:

- How long, and in what capacity, the writer has known you
- That the writer knows about the charges you are facing
- Whether the writer thinks the crime is out of character
- The writer's opinion of you in the capacity in which he or she knows you (e.g. whether you have been a good student or a polite neighbour)
- Any positive changes that the writer has seen as a result of rehabilitation
- Anything else that the writer wishes to add about your character

Who should it be addressed to?

The reference should be addressed to "The Presiding Magistrate" and signed by the writer.

Character reference guide fact sheet.docx

Phone: (08) 87 236 236 (Local) or 1300 369 236 (Regional)

Fax: (08) 87 236 232

E-Mail: southeast_sa@clc.net.au



Template for a character reference – You will need to adapt it so it fits your individual circumstances

[Date]
[Referee's name]
[Referee's address]
[MOUNT GAMBIER SA 5290]

Mount Gambier Magistrates Court
To the Presiding Magistrate,

I have known [your name] for the last [number of years]. I know [your name] through [relationship with you, e.g. work, school, treatment program].

During this time I have found [your name] to be an honest and trustworthy person. I have trusted [him/her] to [e.g. look after pets, babysit children]. **OR** In the time I have known [him/her], [he/she] has been a good [employee/student/patient] who has dealt with me honestly.

[Short paragraph about family or employment history, and person's character]

[Your name] has told me [he/she] has been charged with [name of the charge].

[Short paragraph supporting your version of the events, and why the event may have occurred.]

[Statement of regret, e.g.] [He/she] has told me [he/she] is embarrassed about the incident and does not normally behave in that manner. [He/she] also said [he/she] was willing to pay [for the damage caused, e.g. broken glasses to be replaced].

Yours sincerely,

[Referee's name]