How to Write Your Letter to the Board

This letter is your mini parole packet. If the Board read nothing else in your file but this one letter, it should be able to make the case for your release on its own. There's no legally required format and no guarantee that comes with writing a good one — but this structure covers everything a voting Board member is trying to find out: who you are, what happened, whether you understand it, what you've done since, and what happens the day you walk out.

Formatting rules

- Personal letter format — not a business letter, not a legal filing. Write like you're writing to a person.
- Printed or typed. If handwritten, print in block letters — never cursive.
- If typed, 10 characters per inch maximum, in a plain, common font. Nothing decorative.
- 1-inch margins on all four sides. Don't shrink them to fit more in — paper is free.
- Aim for 1.5 pages or less. Say what needs saying without padding, but don't leave anything out to hit a page count.
- Close with "Sincerely," or "Respectfully," skip four lines, sign your name by hand, and print your name underneath.

When to send it

The Board pulls your case file **six months before your first parole review**, and **four months before every review after that**. Your letter has to arrive before that date, not before the review itself — count backward and mail early. Six months is the minimum: the Board prefers to have your letter a **full year before a first review** (six months before later reviews), so start early. If you've already missed the window, hand a copy to your Institutional Parole Officer at the time of your interview instead.

Mail a signed copy to:

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TDCJ Parole Division, Attention: Correspondence
P.O. Box 13401, Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711
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Confirm this address with your Institutional Parole Officer before mailing — addresses can change, and a different address applies to Special Review and clemency requests specifically.

The nine parts, in order

1. **Header:** your full name, TDCJ ID#, and current mailing address.
2. **Date.** If you send more than one letter over time, this is how the Board tells which is current.
3. **Sentence information:** your current age, your age at conviction, time served, total sentence length, the crime of conviction, and a plain statement that you're asking for parole.

4. **The crime, stated plainly.** What happened, and who it affected — including you. State it without minimizing it and without "poor me" framing. The Board already has the offense report; this paragraph tells them whether you can own it.
5. **Remorse, stated directly.** Say, in plain words, that you're sorry, and how it changed you. If you maintain your innocence, don't lie either way — explain honestly why you dispute the conviction and what you're doing about it, without re-litigating the case at length.
6. **What's changed:** education, vocational or trade certifications, and — most importantly — programs that address whatever led to the offense. Connect them to what actually changed in how you think or act, not just a list of certificates.
7. **Your living plan:** where you'll live, with whom, what kind of home, how far it is from your parole office, work, and support system. Always include a backup address with the same detail.
8. **Your employment plan:** a real job offer with full employer contact information, or — if you don't have one yet — the field you intend to work in, why you're qualified, and a backup plan.
9. **Conclusion:** restate that you're ready and give the Board confidence you'll succeed. Close, sign, and print your name.

Checklist before you mail it

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[ ] All nine parts are present, in order
[ ] Personal letter format, not legal/business format
[ ] Printed or typed, 10 cpi max, plain font, 1-inch margins
[ ] 1.5 pages or less
[ ] Dated
[ ] Signed by hand, with printed name underneath
[ ] Mailed in time to arrive before your case-pull date
[ ] Address confirmed with your Institutional Parole Officer
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Other Resources

- **TX-CURE** (Texas CURE) — statewide criminal-justice advocacy nonprofit: www.texascure.org · (214) 348-0293
- **TIFA** (Texas Inmate Families Association) — support and advocacy for families of incarcerated people, runs its own packet-writing support programs: www.tifa.org · (512) 371-0900
- **Board of Pardons and Paroles, Office of the Ombudsman** — for family/friend questions about the parole process: (512) 406-5864 · bpp-pio@tdcj.texas.gov

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