

Checklist: Writing

You can print this checklist as it may help you when you write your legal document.

Tick on each box as you go.

Writing tips

Read the documents that relate to your case

- Have a look at any previous letters you sent or received.
 - Read over any court documents that are part of your legal issue.
 - If you are relying on any laws in your case, read over the information you have about those laws.

For more information, see [Checklist- Reading legal documents](#).

Who are you writing to?

- If you are writing a letter to a law firm, a court, or a third party, you will need their postal address.
 - In some cases, if you are writing to a law firm, you can address the document to the lawyer in charge of the case.
 - If you are writing a court document, you need to include the court details.

What type of document are you writing?

- The **Reading and writing legal documents** section of Representing Myself provides you with practical information about how to prepare legal documents:
 - If you are writing a letter, see [Letters](#).
 - If you are preparing written evidence, see [Affidavits, statements and statutory declarations](#).
 - If you are writing settlement documents, see [Agreements and settlements](#).

- If you are writing an email or fax, see [Emails and faxes](#).
- If you are writing a court document, such as a [Statement of Claim](#) or [Subpoena](#), and check the relevant court rules.

You will find helpful guides on filling out different court forms on this website. For more information, see the 'Forms' section of each topic, or search for a particular form.

Why are you writing?

- If you are writing a response to a legal document, use the same references or headings used in that document.
 - If you are writing to start a case or make a claim based on something you believe you are entitled to, make sure you state clearly why you believe you have a claim or entitlement (for example you had a contract with the other party).
 - If you are writing because you are making a request, such as for more time, or more information, provide a reason for why you need the time or information.

Write in drafts

- Write down all your ideas in point form.
 - Make a list of the issues you want to raise in your legal document.
 - Write a first draft of your legal document.

Check the format

- If you are typing your document:
 - Use Arial or Times New Roman font
 - Include margins on the left, right, top and bottom of the page of at least 2.5cm
 - Use A4 paper size
 - Use portrait page set-up
 - Align words left, or justify your text.

Is your layout easy to read?

- Use a font size between 10 and 12 point (if you are typing your document).
 - Put separate ideas into separate paragraphs.
 - Use headings if your document is long.
 - Use dot points or numbers for lists.
 - Use black ink if you can (blue is okay if writing by hand).

Check grammar and spelling

- Read your document aloud to see if it makes sense.
 - Proof read your document.
 - Use spell check but don't rely only on that (for example, "their" or "there").

Check for accuracy

- Dates, amounts, location and names should all be stated or described accurately.

Use plain English

- Don't use words if you are not sure of their meaning.
 - Keep sentences short.
 - Avoid using legal jargon.

Watch your language and keep it professional

- Keep emotion out of your document.
 - Don't use slang words or swear words (unless making a statement or affidavit and giving evidence about what words were used).
 - Don't put your personal feelings about other parties or the legal system in your document.

Make sense

- Write your document in date (chronological) order if possible.

- Deal with different issues separately.
- Avoid irrelevant information.

 **Keep a copy**

- Keep a copy of any document you write and send. You may need to refer to it when you read any response sent to you or when you write your next document.