



## Guide to Asking an Attorney for Help

It can be intimidating to seek legal assistance. You may have a lot to say about the circumstances and you want others to understand you and feel compelled to help. At the same time, it's important to be focused in explaining what your needs are. Attorneys and others in helping professions are often short on time and need the essential details of your story in order to determine if there is a way to provide legal assistance or support. Please use this guide as a way to help you communicate in the most effective way possible with attorneys and others in legal/helping professions.

1. **Write a letter.** Your letter should be no more than one page. If possible type it on a computer. Include the date, your contact information, and the names and contact information of any potential witnesses who are aware of or involved in your situation.
2. **First, briefly introduce yourself.** Briefly explain who you are and where you live. If you have a job, explain where you work.
3. **Briefly explain the problem.** Try to keep this under 250 words. Don't forget to attach any documents or records that relate to the problem.
4. **Briefly state how you would like to see the problem resolved.** Ideally, what it is that you want to have happen that would solve the problem?
5. **Briefly state what you are asking for.** What is it you need: a lawyer? Information? Resources?
6. **Be succinct, respectful and as clear as possible.** Attorneys and others in helping professions are generally busy people and deal with numerous issues. Be mindful of their time restrictions.
7. **Thank the person for his/her time.** Don't forget to say a brief thank you at the conclusion of your letter.
8. **Conclusion.** Follow up to your letter. If you don't get the response you are hoping for, don't give up. Reach out to other potential sources of help.