PRISON PROFESSORS

FEDERAL EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY WORKBOOK



A Practical Guide to

Pardon and Commutation Petitions

MICHAEL SANTOS

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Michael Santos

Prison Professors Charitable Corporation

Federal Executive Clemency Workbook

A Practical Guide to Pardon and Commutation Petitions

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About this workbook

This self-directed course covers federal executive clemency. The sample applications and supporting records in Appendices A and B use fictional people and circumstances.

The workbook provides general education. For filing requirements, use the current instructions from the Office of the Pardon Attorney. Appendix C lists the mailing address and ways to request forms on paper.

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A Letter from Michael Santos

Dear Reader,

If you're facing federal charges, serving a federal sentence, or living with a federal conviction, you may want to learn what executive clemency could change. It's a long shot. Begin by asking what you hope to accomplish and what you would want someone reviewing your request to know about you. This workbook will help you study the process and decide what you can do now to prepare.

My name is Michael Santos. I founded Prison Professors Charitable Corporation, a nonprofit that provides free educational resources to people at every stage of the criminal justice system.

While serving my 45-year federal sentence, I had to think about how I would use the years ahead. To paraphrase basketball coach Bobby Knight, the will to win will only take you so far. You also need the will to prepare.

Anyone reviewing a future request could read the court record and learn about the choices I made in my early twenties. I wanted that person to see how I had responded to those choices. If I hoped to earn someone's support, I needed to give them a way to learn what I was doing with my time and how I was preparing for life after prison.

While in prison, I set out to earn credentials that could help others take my work on prison and sentencing reform seriously. I earned university degrees and wrote about the policies I hoped to change. I shared my writing so others could consider those ideas. Some people came to know me well enough to support me. I drew on that record when I asked Presidents Clinton and Obama to commute my sentence. Neither granted my request. I served 9,500 days in federal prison.

The work I began in prison helped me build a life after release. I built businesses that allowed me to earn a living and pay taxes, and I continued working for changes in the law. I launched Prison Professors to expand opportunities for people to earn greater liberty through merit. Clemency is one of those potential paths.

A Letter from Michael Santos

We created the free Profiles platform at Prison Professors so members of our community could document their work and draw on that record when an opportunity for greater liberty becomes available. If you're reading this book or working through any of our free lessons, we consider you part of our community.

You can use the entries on your profile to review your progress, make adjustments, and give others a way to see how you've followed through on your plans.

A certificate can show when you completed a course. A journal entry can describe how you used the training. A testimonial from a person who saw you do the work can add details from firsthand experience. Over time, people who get to know your work may be willing to advise you, connect you with opportunities, or join a coalition of support for a future petition.

You may already have years of work to draw on. Begin with an experience you would want a future reader to understand. Date the entry, describe what you did, and explain what you learned from it. As you work through the lessons, you can decide what else belongs in your record.

Each lesson will conclude with a few open-ended questions. Answer the questions that help you think through your own circumstances, and use your answers as the basis for journal entries on your profile. Come back to an entry after a few months to see what you've followed through on and what you would change. If you later have an opportunity to request greater liberty, you can draw on what you wrote to explain how you prepared and point to records or people who can verify the work.

You'll find three ways to start a free profile on page 6, including how to write to our team by mail.

Michael Santos
Founder, Prison Professors

Start Your Free Prison Professors Profile

Begin with a notebook and an experience you want to remember. Give the entry a date. What were you working toward? What did you do, and what did you learn?

Write to us by mail

Tell the Profiles team you'd like help opening a free profile. Include your name and return mailing address. You can enclose a handwritten entry.

Prison Professors / Profiles
1205 BMC Drive, Suite #706
Cedar Park, TX 78613

Use your facility's email system

If you have access, write to Interns@PrisonProfessors.org with "Profile" as the subject. Include your name and ask for help getting started.

Ask someone you trust to help

A family member or friend with internet access can go to PrisonProfessors.org/profiles to help open or claim your profile. You can send that person entries to add.

What you can build over time

A biography gives context to your choices. Journal entries describe what you did and learned. Book reports show how you applied an idea. A release plan explains what you're preparing for and what you can confirm.

For a sample letter and journal example, see Appendix C, pages 103–104.

LESSON 1

Executive Clemency: Learn the Process and Prepare

If you could ask the President to change something about your situation, what would you ask for? Before you look for a form or ask someone for a letter of support, write down two questions.

- What relief might fit my situation?
- What would I want someone reviewing my request to know about how I've used my time?

When I began serving my federal sentence, I made it a priority to learn how the system worked. The President could grant clemency in my case. I wanted to give someone reviewing a future request a way to learn about the work I had done since sentencing. Writing about prison policy gave others a way to read my ideas and decide for themselves whether they wanted to support my work. By the time I applied, I could point to work I had done over the years.

You can begin with this lesson and a notebook. Write down what you know, the questions you still have, and one action you can take this week. As you move through the workbook, return to these notes and revise them as you learn.

Understand what you want to ask for

Executive clemency includes several forms of relief the President can grant for a federal offense. This workbook focuses on two. A commutation reduces all or part of a sentence a person is serving. A pardon expresses presidential forgiveness for an offense. Clemency for a state conviction follows that state's process.

Consider two fictional examples.

- Luis is serving a federal prison sentence. He wants to know whether the President could shorten the time he has left to serve. He would start by studying commutation.
- Renee finished her federal sentence several years ago. As she looks for new work, she wants to understand what a pardon could mean when she discusses her conviction with a prospective employer. She would start by studying a pardon.

Each person begins by naming the result they want. That gives them a question they can take to the application instructions.

Start with the court that handled your case and the part of your situation you want to change. If you have your judgment, look for the name of the court and the sentence it imposed. If you need a copy, make a note to ask your attorney or contact the clerk of the court that entered the judgment. Dates and court names can help you check whether you are reading instructions that apply to your case.

Pause and write.

- In one or two sentences, what would you want a decision to change in your life?
- What detail about your case would help you explain that request more clearly?

How federal clemency works

1

You prepare, apply, and send updates.

Choose the form for the relief you're seeking. Follow its instructions for sending the completed application to the Office of the Pardon Attorney. Keep the clemency case number from your confirmation. If something changes while your request is pending, such as your address or employment, you can send an update and include that number.

2

The Department of Justice investigates and recommends.

The department reviews the information you submit. It may ask the U.S. Attorney and the sentencing judge for their views. For a pardon, the department may ask the FBI to conduct a background investigation. The department makes a recommendation to the President.

3

The President decides.

The President can grant or deny clemency and can act independently of the department's recommendation. The Office of the Pardon Attorney sends you notice of the decision.

Adapted from "How Clemency Works," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney.

Give yourself a way to keep track of what you learn. For each question, write down what you know, where you learned it, and what you need to verify. For example, your judgment may tell you the date the court imposed your sentence. If you also need the date you completed supervision, mark it as a detail to confirm and look for a record that shows it. If your form shows a revision date, copy it into your notes so you can tell whether you and anyone helping you are using the same version.

If you need a paper application, you can ask your institution's education staff whether they can help you get a copy. You can also ask someone you trust to mail you the current form and instructions.

Pause and write.

- Which part of the process do you understand least right now?
- What question could you write down to guide your next review?

Build a record someone else can understand

A presentence report gives the court information about your life and the offense before sentencing. Years later, a person reviewing your request may want to understand how you responded to your circumstances. Start with one responsibility you accepted or one problem you worked on. Write down what you did, what you learned, and what changed as you kept at it.

Imagine Jordan, a person in federal prison who wants to work in a shipping department after release. A job description mentions inventory and order records, so Jordan begins practicing with sample inventory sheets. In the first few weeks, Jordan notices a recurring error when comparing items received with the order list. Jordan adds a column to check the difference, keeps the earlier sheets, and asks an instructor to review a later one.

A month later, Jordan compares the early and recent worksheets. The instructor suggests checking item numbers before comparing quantities, and Jordan makes that the first step in the next practice session. The dated worksheets give Jordan a way to explain a skill to a prospective employer and show how the work changed after the instructor's feedback.

From an action to a record

1. Choose a skill

Jordan identifies inventory tracking as a skill to practice for a shipping job.

2. Record the work

Jordan dates the worksheets and keeps examples from before and after adding a check column.

3. Review and adjust

Jordan reviews the work with an instructor and decides what to practice next.

A notebook can hold an account like Jordan's. You may choose to share your entry on your Prison Professors profile. If you want the Office of the Pardon Attorney to consider a particular entry or record, send a copy with your application or as an update while your request is pending.

Pause and write.

- What is one responsibility you have taken on?
- Which record or person could help someone understand how you followed through?

Write your journal entry

Date the entry and choose one action you can complete in the next seven days. If you already have work to draw on, start with something you want to explain more clearly. Pick a day to review what you did and leave yourself room to add what you learned.

- What do I want someone reviewing my request to understand about my preparation?
- What can I do this week to put that preparation into practice, and what will I keep to show what I did?
- When will I review the result, and how will I decide what to do next?

Keep your answer about the relief you want to understand. In Lesson 2, you'll use it as you look more closely at what a pardon and a commutation can do.

Start your profile from prison

See page 6 for three ways to get started, including by mail. Appendix C gives a sample letter on page 104.

LESSON 2

Pardon or Commutation: Understand What You Are Asking For

In Lesson 1, you wrote down what you would want a clemency decision to change. Read your answer again. You may have written that you want to return home sooner. You may have named a job you hope to pursue after your sentence. The next step is to explain what you would ask the President to do and how that decision could affect the rest of your plans.

Start with two questions.

- Which part of my sentence would I want the President to reduce?
- If I'm seeking a pardon, what would I want presidential forgiveness to help me accomplish?

One question may fit your circumstances better today. Consider what you know about your sentence and what you would need to find out before explaining your request to someone else.

If you want a shorter sentence

A commutation reduces all or part of a federal sentence a person is serving. The language of the grant tells you which part of the sentence the President reduced and what terms apply. A grant can also remit an unpaid criminal financial penalty, such as a fine or restitution, if the President includes that relief.

Think back to Luis, who wants an earlier release. Suppose his judgment includes a prison term, a period of supervised release, and restitution. To prepare a request, he can start by writing down the prison term he wants shortened and explaining what an earlier release would allow him to do. If the President issues a grant that addresses only his prison term, Luis would use the judgment to plan for supervision and restitution. He could then work on where to live, how to earn a living, and how to meet his obligations in the community.

Start with the judgment and any later orders that changed your sentence. Write down the term you want reduced and the record that shows it. If your request concerns money, identify the obligation and find a record showing the amount you still owe. Dates and amounts give you something specific to work from as you consider what to ask for.

Pause and write.

- If you wanted a commutation, what part of the sentence would you ask the President to reduce, and why?
- How would the change affect the plans or responsibilities you're preparing for?

If you want a pardon

A pardon expresses the President's forgiveness for a federal offense. It can restore certain rights restricted because of the conviction and may help with employment or professional licensing. The effect depends on the rule that applies to the opportunity you are considering. Both the conviction and the pardon appear on the federal record.

Recall Renee, who finished her sentence several years ago and wants to pursue new work. Suppose she learns that the work requires a state license. She could begin by finding out which agency issues the license and how it considers a federal conviction. If the agency has a written rule or has explained its decision in a letter, that gives Renee something specific to study. She can ask how the agency would consider a pardon and explain why the opportunity matters to her.

The Office of the Pardon Attorney's regular pardon process generally calls for completing the sentence and meeting a waiting period. For someone who served time in confinement, the usual waiting period is at least five years after release. The Department may waive the waiting period in exceptional cases. These filing rules guide the Department of Justice. The President has the constitutional authority to grant a pardon before a sentence ends. We'll look more closely at the regular filing instructions in the lesson on pardon applications.

Pause and write.

- If you sought a pardon, what would you hope it could help you do?
- Who makes the decision about that opportunity, and what would you want to learn about the rule they apply?

Compare the two requests

You may have more than one goal. The comparison below can help you name each goal and identify the first fact to check.

Question	Commutation	Pardon
What am I asking for?	A reduction in the federal sentence I'm serving.	Presidential forgiveness for a federal offense.
What detail would clarify my goal?	The part of my sentence I want reduced, such as my prison term or an unpaid fine.	What I hope to accomplish, such as pursuing work that requires a license.
What can I check now?	My judgment, any later orders, and the dates or amounts relevant to my request.	My sentence dates and, if a specific restriction affects me, the agency or rule behind it.

Sources for this comparison include the Office of the Pardon Attorney's "Frequently Asked Questions," the federal clemency regulations in 28 C.F.R. Part 1, and Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.

Write a separate sentence for each goal you identified. A person who hopes to come home sooner could write, “I want to request a reduction in my prison term so I can begin working in the community sooner.” A person who wants a pardon could write, “I’m seeking forgiveness for my federal offense, and I want to learn how a pardon could affect my application for a license.” As you gather facts, add the dates, records, or rules that apply to your own situation.

Pause and write.

- Which of your goals relates to the terms of your sentence? Which relates to a consequence of the conviction?
- What information would help you decide what to study next?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry and describe the result you hope to achieve in your own words. If your goal is still taking shape, use the entry to identify a question you want to answer. Choose one step you can take in the next seven days.

- What would I ask the President to do, and how would that decision affect my plans?
- Which detail do I need to verify? Where could I find the record or rule that answers my question?
- What work did I commit to in Lesson 1 that I want to continue this week? What will I write down when I review my progress?

Bring your proposed request and your questions into Lesson 3. We’ll look at who makes the decision, how others contribute to the review, and what you can keep doing as you prepare.

LESSON 3

Presidential Clemency: Understand Who Decides and Keep Preparing

Read the request you wrote in Lesson 2. Imagine someone reading it alongside the judgment in your case. The judgment can tell that person what the court decided. What could you show them about how you have used the time since sentencing?

Start with two questions.

- What work would I want a person reviewing my request to know about?
- Who has seen that work closely enough to describe what I did?

You can begin answering those questions before you apply. They can also help you decide what to keep working on while an application is under review.

Understand who decides and who contributes

The President decides whether to grant federal clemency. When you apply through the Office of the Pardon Attorney, the Department of Justice investigates and recommends an outcome. The President can act independently of that recommendation. The federal clemency regulations guide the Department's work under the President's constitutional authority.

Depending on the case, the Department may ask the sentencing judge or the U.S. Attorney for comments. In some cases, people harmed by the offense may also be invited to give their views. A person who knows your work may be able to describe what you've done since sentencing. Each person contributes from a different vantage point. As you prepare your application, consider what your own account and supporting records can add to the information others may provide.

Pause and write.

- What could a person learn from the judgment in your case, and what part of your story would you need to explain in your own words?
- Who has first-hand knowledge that could help someone understand the work you've done?

Keep track of your application

Keep a dated record of what you send and what you receive. When the Office of the Pardon Attorney confirms receipt and assigns a case number, write the number in your notes. If the office asks for more information, record what it needs and any date it gives you to respond. When you send the information, note the date and keep a copy. If someone helps you gather records, you can use the same list to keep track of who is doing what.

A pending application can carry over to a new presidential administration. While your request remains pending, you can send an update by mail to the Office of the Pardon Attorney. Include your case number if you have one so the office can connect the update to your file.

Pay attention to the wording of a notice you receive. An administrative closure means the office closed the file before the President acted. For example, the office may close a file if an applicant withdraws the request or repeatedly fails to provide required information. A denial means the President decided against granting the request.

An example from Luis's notebook

Imagine Luis from Lesson 2 has mailed his commutation application. His notes help him see what has happened and what to do next.

Date	What happened	Next action
April 8	I mailed my application for commutation.	Keep a copy and record the mailing date.
May 12	I received a confirmation letter from the office.	Record my case number and check the letter for requests or deadlines.
June 3	The office asked for a copy of a later court order.	Get the order, send a copy with my case number, and record when I send it.

Sources for the federal process described here include the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "How Clemency Works" and "Frequently Asked Questions," and 28 C.F.R. §§ 1.6 and 1.11.

A notebook can serve this purpose from the day you start gathering records. If you haven't applied, you can use it to list the documents you need, where you might get them, and when you'll check on them again.

Pause and write.

- What document, letter, or date would you put in your notebook first? How would it help you decide what to do next?
- If a person helps you gather records, what would you each agree to do and when would you check in?

Give supporters specific work to describe

While I served my sentence, I wanted to build a record that could support a future request for relief. I hoped people who came to know my work would speak on my behalf. To give them something they could evaluate for themselves, I focused on three kinds of work.

1. I earned university degrees so I could deepen my knowledge and prepare to earn a living after prison.
2. I published articles, chapters, and books about prison and sentencing reform so others could consider the ideas I wanted to contribute.
3. I used my education and writing to build relationships with people who could learn about my work and decide whether to support my efforts.

Think about a course you completed or a project you worked on. A certificate can show when you finished a course. A journal entry can describe a concept you applied, where you struggled, and what you changed. An instructor who saw you do the work may be able to describe how you responded to feedback. Together, those details help someone understand the progress you've made.

Suppose Luis's brother offers him a place to live after release. Luis could explain what he hopes to do when he returns and ask his brother to confirm what they've arranged, including where Luis could stay and for how long. If his brother chooses to write a letter, he can describe what he personally knows and what he has agreed to do. That gives a reviewer specific information about how Luis plans to get started in the community.

Pause and write.

- What could you show someone to help that person understand a responsibility you've taken on or a skill you've developed?
- Who could give you feedback on that work, and how would you follow up after you hear from them?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Choose one step you can take in the next seven days. You might follow up on a document, finish part of a project, or ask someone who knows your work to give you feedback. Set a date to review what you did.

- What step can I take this week that supports the plan I described in Lesson 2?
- What will I record so I can explain what I did, what I learned, and what I need to do next?
- Who might benefit from knowing about that work, and what could I share to give them a specific example?

Keep your notes about the result you hope to achieve. In Lesson 4, we'll look at pardons and expungement and what each can mean for a conviction record.

LESSON 4

Pardons and Expungement: Understand What a Pardon Can Change

Look back at the result you wrote down in Lesson 3. If you want to work in a particular field, you may need to know how a licensing board would consider your conviction. If you want to change how the record itself is treated, you need to find out what relief the law allows in the court that handled your case.

Begin with two questions.

- What do I want to be able to do?
- What rule governs that opportunity, and who applies it?

You may already have a written notice that identifies the obstacle. You may still need to find out whether your conviction affects the opportunity you want. Either way, name the opportunity before you decide what relief to study.

Understand what can change on your record

A presidential pardon expresses forgiveness for a federal offense. It can relieve some legal restrictions associated with the conviction and may help when you apply for a job or a professional license. Both the conviction and the pardon appear on the criminal record. If an application asks for information about a conviction, read the exact question and the accompanying instructions so you understand what the decision-maker asks you to disclose.

Expungement concerns how the law treats the record itself. In the federal system, courts grant expungement in limited circumstances. The Office of the Pardon Attorney directs people with questions about a federal expungement to the court where the conviction occurred. For a state conviction, look to the law and procedures of the state that handled the case. The available remedies and their effects vary.

Start with your judgment if you need to confirm which court handled your case or which offense appears in the record. Those facts will help you ask a more specific question about your options and understand which authority can answer it.

Sources include the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Frequently Asked Questions," and the Office of Legal Counsel's opinion "Whether a Presidential Pardon Expunges Judicial and Executive Branch Records of a Crime."

Pause and write.

- What outcome are you seeking, and what would you want to find out about how your record affects it?
- Which facts from your judgment would help you explain your question clearly?

Find the rule that affects your opportunity

Think back to Renee from Lesson 2. She wants to enter a profession that requires a state license. Before spending money on training, she can ask the licensing board how it considers a federal conviction. She can also ask how the board would treat a pardon and what education, exams, or other qualifications she would need to complete.

Suppose the instructions Renee receives say that the board reviews criminal history as part of the application. She could ask the board whether it offers an initial review before she enrolls in a training program and what information it would need for that review. A dated copy of the instructions and any written answer would give her a record to use when deciding how to invest her time.

If you have a particular outcome in mind, use the questions below to begin. If you need a paper copy of the requirements, ask the office that applies them how to request one. Write down the name of the office, the date you asked, and what you still need to learn.

My goal	Where I would start	A question to ask
Understand how a pardon could affect a specific opportunity.	The written rule of the office, employer, or board making the decision.	How do you consider a federal conviction for which a pardon has been granted?
Learn whether expungement may be available in my case.	The judgment and the court that handled the case.	What expungement procedure, if any, applies to this kind of case?
Qualify for a professional license.	The licensing board's current requirements and application instructions.	What qualifications does the board require, and how does it review a criminal record?

Pause and write.

- Who makes the decision about the opportunity you want? Which document or office could help you understand the rule that person applies?
- What would you want to know before you invest time or money in preparing for that opportunity?

Use what you learn to move your plan forward

While Renee waits for a response, she can review training descriptions and find out which skills would help her in more than one kind of work. If the board identifies a barrier, she can ask what review or relief may be available. She can also explore work that uses the same skills and has different requirements. Each answer gives her information she can use to decide what to do next.

You can use a release plan to record the work you want to pursue, the requirements you have confirmed, and the steps you intend to take. Use a journal entry to explain what you learned, how it affected your plans, and what you did with that information. If someone asks about your preparation, you can point to a specific course, a project, or a responsibility you took on and explain how it connects to your goal.

Pause and write.

- Which skill or responsibility could you work on now while you learn more about the rules that affect your goal?
- How would you adjust your plan if the office you contact identifies a requirement you had overlooked?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Name one opportunity you want to pursue and one question you want to answer about it. Then choose an action you can take in the next seven days and set a date to review what you learned.

- What opportunity or responsibility am I preparing for, and what do I still need to learn about how my conviction affects it?
- What question could I put in writing, and who would I ask to answer it?
- What can I work on this week while I wait for an answer, and what will I record about that work?

Carry your notes into the next lesson. The more clearly you can describe your goal and the rule that affects it, the easier it will be to identify which clemency questions you still need to answer.

LESSON 5

Clemency FAQs: Know What to Expect and Keep Preparing

In Lesson 4, you named an opportunity and a rule you wanted to understand. Look at that question again. You may also have questions about how to present a clemency request, what to send while it is pending, or when you could apply again after a denial. Give each question its own place in your notes so you can decide what to do next.

Start with two questions.

- What would someone reviewing my request need to learn from my written application?
- What could I do this week that would help me prepare, even if I'm still deciding whether to apply?

Find the process that applies to you

Eligible applicants can prepare and submit a federal pardon or commutation petition on their own or with a lawyer. If you're unsure what a question on the form asks, the Office of the Pardon Attorney can clarify its instructions. A lawyer can help if you need to understand how the law applies to your circumstances.

As you saw in Lesson 2, the President can grant a pardon before a person completes a sentence. The Department of Justice says it reviews appropriate early requests using the form titled "Pardon After Completion of Sentence." If that timing applies to you, read the current instructions and clarify which requirements the office will apply to your request.

Check the law named in your judgment. If your conviction is for a D.C. Code offense, you can seek presidential clemency through the Office of the Pardon Attorney. The D.C. Clemency Board may provide a recommendation. If you were sentenced under the former Federal Youth Corrections Act, check whether the court issued a certificate setting aside your conviction. A certificate can give you a basis to ask the FBI to correct how the conviction appears in your record.

Pause and write.

- Which information in your judgment would help you identify the application process that applies to you?
- What question do you want clarified, and whom could you ask to answer it?

Put your explanation in writing

The Office of the Pardon Attorney reviews pardon and commutation applications through a written process. The review of a pardon may include an FBI background investigation. Write the explanation you would want the office to consider. Describe the relief you seek, why you seek it, and which records or people can support what you say.

If you completed a course, a certificate can show what you finished. Your own explanation can describe a skill you practiced and how you used it. The Office of the Pardon Attorney recommends sending copies of records. If you have a video or an online profile that documents your progress, explain the relevant work in writing and submit the supporting documents in a format the office accepts.

Imagine Renee from Lesson 4 completes the first training course required for the license she wants while her pardon application is pending. She could send a copy of her completion certificate with a short explanation of which requirement she met and what she plans to do next. That would tell a reviewer how she followed through on the plan in her application.

Pause and write.

- What part of your progress would you want a reviewer to understand, and which record could support your explanation?
- What could you add in your own words to help the reader understand why that work matters to your plans?

Decide what to do after you file

Use the notebook from Lesson 3 to record what you send and any notice you receive. While your application is pending, you can send written updates by mail or email. Include your case number if available. A pending application can carry over to a new presidential administration. Keep using your existing case number for any updates.

The Department of Justice publishes the names and certain case details of people who receive clemency. It can also release existing lists of people whose requests were denied in response to public-records requests under the Freedom of Information Act. If the President denies your request, you may receive a notice without a reason for the decision. Use the date of denial to calculate when you could reapply.

What happened	What I can do	What I'll record
My application is still pending.	Send a written update when I have new information relevant to my request.	My case number, what changed, and when I sent the update.
The President denied my request for commutation.	Reapply at least 12 months after the date of denial if I choose to submit another request.	The denial date and the earliest date I can reapply.
The President denied my request for a pardon.	Reapply at least 24 months after the date of denial if I choose to submit another request.	The denial date, the earliest date I can reapply, and what I could add to a new application.

These procedures and reapplication periods come from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Frequently Asked Questions."

Suppose Luis later receives a commutation denial dated September 15, 2026. Under the Department's guidance, he could reapply as early as September 15, 2027. He can use that time to review his release plan, follow through on a commitment he described, and write down what has changed. If he applies again, those notes will help him explain the work he did after his earlier submission.

Pause and write.

- What change in your circumstances would help a reviewer understand something new about your request?
- If you decide to apply again after a denial, what would you want to explain more fully or support with a current record?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Choose one question that affects what you want to do next and one action you can take in the next seven days. Set a date to review what you learned.

- What question about the clemency process affects my next decision?
- What can I finish this week, and what will I record so I can explain what I did?
- What would I want a reviewer to learn about my progress from the next document I prepare?

Keep your notes and the records you identified. In Lesson 6, we'll look at how to prepare the record behind a pardon application.

LESSON 6

Applying for a Pardon: Prepare the Record Behind Your Request

In Lesson 5, you chose a question that affects your next decision. If you're considering a pardon, return to the opportunity you identified in Lesson 4. A pardon application asks how the conviction has affected you and what you hope would change. It also gives you room to explain the choices you've made since the conviction and what others have seen you do.

Start with two questions.

- What would I ask the President to consider, and why?
- What could a reader learn about my life today from my answers, my records, and the people who know my work?

Find the form and understand when to use it

The U.S. Department of Justice calls its standard form "Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence." Under the ordinary rule, applicants should wait at least five years after release from confinement, or after conviction if the court imposed no prison sentence. The rule generally calls for waiting until probation, parole, or supervised release ends. As you read in Lesson 5, the Office of the Pardon Attorney also reviews appropriate early pardon requests using this form. If you're considering an early request, clarify which instructions apply to you.

If your immediate goal is a reduction in the sentence you're serving, Lesson 7 covers the commutation application. You can study the pardon questions now and use them to decide which parts of your work and progress you want to document over time.

Pause and write.

- What do you hope a pardon would change? What would you want to confirm about the timing or effect of a request?

Match each answer to a record

Start with the judgment if you need to confirm the case number, offense, sentence, or financial penalties. The presentence report, statement of reasons, charging document, and docket can help you check other details. The form lists these court records as optional attachments. If a date in your notes differs from the date in a record, mark the question and check it before you finish your answer. The clerk of the court that handled your case can explain how to request available records by mail.

Use this guide to sort the information you already have and identify what you still need.

Part of the form	What the office asks about	What you can gather or write
A–B. Background and reasons	Who you are, how the conviction has affected you, and why you seek a pardon.	Write down what you hope would change. Look for any letter that explains a barrier you faced.
C–I. Life and responsibilities	Community activities, education, places you've lived, military service, work, substance use, and finances.	Make a timeline. Add dates, responsibilities, and records you can use to check details.
J. Case and criminal history	The case, your conduct and responsibility, and any other criminal history the form asks you to list.	Use your judgment to check case details. Describe your role in your own words.
K–N. Signatures, letters, and checklist	Your signed oath and authorization, letters of support, and the final review before you file.	Identify three primary references. Review the signature pages and gather the attachments you plan to send.

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence," pp. 3 and 6–24. For filing timing and early requests, see 28 C.F.R. § 1.2 and the office's "Frequently Asked Questions."

Think back to Renee, who wants to qualify for a state license. Suppose the licensing board writes to say it will review her conviction along with her application. She could use that letter to explain why she is seeking a pardon and which decision still rests with the board. Her training certificate would serve a different purpose. It would show which requirement she completed while she worked toward the license. In her own account, she could explain what she learned in the course and what qualification she plans to work on next.

Pause and write.

- Which answer could you support with a record you already have? What would you still need to explain in your own words?

Ask people who know your work

The form calls for three signed primary letters. Those three writers must be unrelated to you by blood or marriage and willing to be interviewed during a background investigation. If you include additional letters, identify exactly three as your primary references. Give your references Section M of the form and time to write from their own experience. They can attach extra pages if they need room.

Suppose a training instructor observed Renee practice a skill, respond to feedback, and help another participant learn it. The instructor could describe those events and when they happened. Someone who only saw the certificate could confirm less about how she did the work. Think about the people who have seen you take on responsibilities at work, in class, or in your community, including while you serve your sentence.

Pause and write.

- Who has seen you take on a responsibility over time? What could that person describe from firsthand experience?

Review the application before you submit it

Use the form's checklist to review your answers, attachments, and signed support letters. For a question that doesn't apply, the form asks you to write "Not Applicable." Put the section name on any extra page. Read the certification and personal oath and the authorization to release information before signing.

A general federal pardon application can go by mail to the address below. If you're preparing without internet access, you can also write to this office to ask for a paper copy of the form and its instructions. Confirm where to send a completed application using the form you receive. General court-martial convictions have separate submission instructions.

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Pardon Attorney
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Pause and write.

- Which answer or attachment would you want to review again before you sign? What would help you finish it?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Choose one part of the application you want to understand or prepare for. Write down a step you can take in the next seven days and set a date to review what you learned.

- What would I want a reader to understand about my reasons for seeking a pardon?
- Which record or conversation could help me explain a specific part of my progress?
- What can I do this week, and how will I use what I learn to decide what comes next?

Keep your notes on the case and the people who know your work. In Lesson 7, we'll look at how to build a request for a reduction in a sentence.

Use the paper filing guide

See Appendix C, pages 101–102, for ways to request the form, the mailing address, and how to follow up.

LESSON 7

Applying for Commutation: Explain Your Request and Prepare for Release

If the President shortened your prison term, what would you need to do in the first week after release? That question can help you prepare two parts of a commutation petition. You can explain the change you're asking for and show how you would handle the responsibilities that come with it.

Start with two questions.

- Which part of my sentence am I asking the President to reduce?
- What have I done to prepare for the change I'm requesting, and how could I show it?

Identify which part of your sentence you want reduced

The Department of Justice calls the form the "Petition for Commutation of Sentence." It offers an option to request a shorter prison term, a shorter prison term together with relief from a fine or restitution, or a reduction in supervised release, probation, or parole. If you're seeking only relief from financial penalties, the Department directs you to a separate remission application.

Check your judgment for each part of the sentence. A grant that reduces only your prison term leaves other obligations in place. If immigration detention or removal could affect where you go after prison, account for it as you plan. A commutation leaves immigration status unchanged and does not prevent removal.

The standard form's instructions call for a federal conviction and an imposed term of prison or supervision. They also ask that there be no pending court challenge to the conviction or sentence, such as a direct appeal or a motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255. The form makes an exception to that instruction for death-penalty cases. Under a separate Department rule, when another court or administrative remedy is available, a person generally should pursue it first. Filing for commutation while such a remedy is available requires a showing of exceptional circumstances. If a court case or another avenue for relief is open to you, clarify how it affects when you can file.

Pause and write.

- How would you describe the change you want in one sentence? What part of your judgment or case record would you check first?

Use the form to organize your preparation

Work through the questions in several sessions. Start with the parts you can answer from records you have. For each answer that needs more work, write down what you need to confirm and where you could find it.

Part of the form	What you'll explain	What you can prepare
Questions 1–3. Identity, contact, and case	Who you are, how to reach you if applicable, and the details of the case and sentence.	Check your judgment, sentence dates, and records of any earlier clemency request.
Questions 4–5. Offense and other record	Your role in the offense, what you did, and other arrests or convictions.	Use the case record to check details. Write about your decisions in your own words.
Question 6. Reasons for clemency	Which change you seek and why you're asking for it.	Draft a short statement of the change and the circumstances behind your request.
Question 7. Rehabilitation	Education, work, treatment, or other activities that have been meaningful to you.	Choose an example. Explain what you learned and how you applied it.
Question 8. Release plans	Where you plan to live, how you'll look for work, and the support available to you.	List the arrangements you've confirmed and the ones you're still working on.
Certification and personal oath	Your signature and the date you sign the petition.	Review the final answers and attachments against the form before you sign.

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Petition for Commutation of Sentence," pp. 1–2 and 4–11. For filing when other remedies are available, see 28 C.F.R. § 1.3.

Pause and write.

- Which section could you begin today? Which fact or record would help you complete one answer?

Explain what you did and how you used your time

When you describe the offense, explain your role, the decisions you made, and the actions you took in your own words. Use the case record to check dates and details. The form asks whether you accept responsibility for your conduct. Give yourself time to think through how to answer that question.

For the rehabilitation section, choose an experience that helps a reader understand how you've responded since the offense. Suppose Luis took responsibility for counting supplies at a prison job. After his count came up short, he began recording each delivery before putting the items away and checking the total with a supervisor. A work evaluation might show his assignment. His explanation can show what he changed after the error and how he handled the responsibility the next time.

Pause and write.

- When did feedback or a mistake lead you to change how you handled a responsibility? What could someone who saw your work add to your account?

Connect your request to a release plan

In Lesson 3, Luis's brother offered him a place to live. Suppose his brother can host him for the first three months. Luis can put that time frame in his plan and ask his brother to describe the arrangement in a letter. If Luis hopes to work for a local shipping company, he can name the job he intends to pursue and what he has learned about its hiring process. He can also say what he plans to do if he needs more time to find work or housing.

Someone reviewing the request can see what Luis has arranged and what still depends on his next steps. The commutation form allows letters from friends, family, and others. A letter can explain what the writer has observed or what the person has agreed to do. Draw on your release plan to decide which details would help a reader understand how you expect to meet your obligations.

Pause and write.

- Which part of your plan could you confirm now? What would you do if one arrangement changed before release?

Review the petition and prepare it for mailing

Answer each question and explain when one doesn't apply. Attach additional pages if you need space. Read the certification and personal oath before you sign. If a Bureau of Prisons official submits the petition on your behalf, the instructions ask you to have that official include the presentence report, statement of reasons, judgment, and a progress report from the past 18 months.

You can write to the Office of the Pardon Attorney to ask for the current form. The instructions allow you to mail a legible petition typed or handwritten in ink. Send the pages and attachments loose, without staples, glue, binding, or tape. Follow the submission instructions on the form you use. Military sentences follow a separate process through the branch of conviction.

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Pardon Attorney
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Pause and write.

- What would you check against a record before signing, and what could you do now to get that record?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Describe one responsibility you're preparing for and why it belongs in your plan. Choose an action for the next seven days and set a date to review what you learn.

- What part of my sentence do I want to understand or ask the President to change?
- Which experience best shows how I have prepared for the responsibilities that would follow?
- What can I confirm this week, and how will I use that information to revise my plan?

In Lesson 8, you'll see how a fictional applicant brings the petition, supporting records, and letters together.

Use the paper filing guide

See Appendix C, pages 101–102, for ways to request the form, the mailing address, and how to follow up.

LESSON 8

Learn From a Sample Commutation Application

When I applied for commutation during the Clinton and Obama administrations, I drew on work I had done long before I filled out either petition. Neither President granted my request. The education, writing, and relationships I developed while serving my sentence still helped me build a life after prison. As you study this sample, look for work you can begin now that would serve you even if your circumstances stay the same.

In Lesson 7, you identified what the commutation form asks. Here, you'll follow Daniel Rowan's fictional application and see how he connects his answers to dated records, a release plan, and letters from people who know his work. The packet is an unsigned teaching example. Use the examples on these pages to work through the lesson on paper.

Start with two questions.

- What would I want a reader to understand from the first page of my request?
- Which part of my account would a record or another person's observations help explain?

State the request and give the reader a way to follow it

Daniel asks to shorten his prison term, with the reduction taking effect 180 days after a grant so he has time to prepare for the transition. His request leaves his five years of supervised release in place. The cover letter states both points up front. Daniel then explains his role in the offense, including that he recruited two couriers, and acknowledges a disciplinary finding for possessing an unauthorized cellphone in 2016.

Read Daniel's complete sample commutation petition

Appendix A starts on page 42. Use the guide there to find the form, release plan, and support letters.

The petition answers the government's questions. The supporting pages give the reader places to look for more detail. As you read the guide below, consider which material would help a reader understand each part of the request.

Part of Daniel's packet	What it shows	What to look for
Cover letter and petition	The change Daniel requests and his account of the offense and his conduct since.	Does the request stay consistent across both documents?
Dated progress record and writing	When events happened and how Daniel responded, including a disciplinary setback.	Which details come from Daniel's own account? What records could confirm them?
Release plan and budget	His proposed housing, work, and expenses, with a plan for delays.	Which arrangements have conditions? What would he do if work starts late?
Support letters	What a mentor, a family member, and a prospective employer observed or offered.	How does each writer know Daniel? What does each person say they can do?
Supporting-document list	Which records the sample illustrates and which a real applicant would need to obtain.	Can you trace an important detail to the person or record that supplies it?

Adapted from Prison Professors, "Sample Commutation Application," November 2026, packet pp. 2–23.

Pause and write.

- What part of your request would you state first? Which detail would you explain more fully in an answer or attachment?

Follow one experience through the record

On April 14, 2026, Daniel writes that he entered a supply count before checking the last shelf. He tells his supervisor, recounts the supplies, and corrects the entry as directed. He decides to check each storage area before signing the count and to review at the end of the week whether he followed that procedure. His journal gives a reader the sequence of decisions and a way to see what he planned to change.

His mentor, Thomas Avery, writes about reading the first draft and asking Daniel to describe the choice he had controlled. Thomas can describe the change he saw in Daniel's writing. Daniel's journal gives Daniel's account of what happened at work. If a reader needed independent confirmation of the incident itself, a supervisor who saw the correction or a dated work record could provide it, if available.

Daniel's book report shows another way to connect learning to action. After reading Earning Freedom, he revises his employment plan around an entry-level job. He identifies what the job would require, how he would get there, and what he could budget from wages. A later reader could compare the two plans and see which questions Daniel still needed to answer.

Pause and write.

- Think of a mistake you corrected or feedback you used. What could your own account explain? Who or what could provide a second view of the same event?

Check the release plan against the letters

Daniel's release plan identifies a place to live with his sister, Elena, subject to approval. Her letter offers him a room for up to 12 months if the residence is approved and explains what she can offer if he has to wait for his first paycheck. A prospective employer, Morgan Vale, describes the shop-assistant position, the conditions on the offer, and the need to confirm a start date. Thomas offers to meet weekly for the first 90 days if Daniel returns to the proposed community and receives any needed approvals.

Read Daniel's budget alongside those letters. His monthly budget assumes a paycheck once work begins. His sister's letter describes help she can offer during a delay, including groceries and time before he has to contribute to household expenses. If work starts later than he expects, Daniel plans to review the money he has left each week and look for other work. The plan tells readers what he could do during a gap between release and a first paycheck.

Pause and write.

- Which promise or assumption in your plan would you want to confirm with someone else? What could you do if that arrangement takes longer than you expect?

Choose what to develop next

Daniel's sample includes a list that identifies the source and purpose of each supporting item. It shows where a person preparing an actual petition would need genuine records, including the judgment and the institutional progress report. You can make a short list in your notebook. For each item, name the answer it would support, who created the record, and what you still need to confirm. Start with one answer you can improve this week.

Pause and write.

- Which part of your account depends on something you still need to verify? What step could help you resolve it?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Describe a responsibility you want to take on and one action that would prepare you for it. Give yourself a date to review what happened and decide whether to adjust your plan.

- What would I want a reader to understand about a decision I've made since my conviction?
- Which document, dated entry, or firsthand observation could help explain that decision?
- What will I do in the next seven days, and what will I look for when I review my progress?

In Lesson 9, you'll study how a fictional pardon applicant uses records and letters to explain his life after prison.

LESSON 9

Learn From a Sample Pardon Application

Imagine someone reviewing your application years after your conviction. The court record can tell that person what happened in the case. What would help them understand how you've lived since then? A dated record of a responsibility you took on, a decision you made, or a commitment you kept can give a reader something specific to consider.

In Lesson 8, Daniel asked for a shorter prison term. Here, Elias Ward asks for a pardon after completing his sentence. Elias, the people who wrote for him, and all the events in his packet are fictional. The examples on these pages give you enough information to work through the lesson on paper.

Start with two questions.

- Why might I seek a pardon, and what would I hope could change?
- Which experience would help someone understand how I've lived since my conviction?

Explain why you're asking for a pardon

Elias asks the President for forgiveness for his federal wire-fraud conviction. He also explains that a prospective employer declined to proceed after a background review in 2022. He hopes a pardon could help him explain his history when he pursues other work. The employers he approaches will make their own hiring decisions.

In his account of the offense, Elias explains that he knowingly sent false invoices for work he hadn't completed. The customer lost money and had to spend time identifying the discrepancies. Elias also reports completing restitution in December 2025. A payment history could confirm when he met that obligation. His own explanation can help a reader understand what he takes responsibility for and which choices he has made since.

Pause and write.

- What would you want a reader to understand about why you might seek a pardon? Which part of your explanation could a record help clarify?

Read Elias's complete sample pardon application

Appendix B starts on page 67. The three primary-reference testimonials appear on pages 98–99.

Pair each detail with a source

The pardon form asks separately about your reasons for applying, the case, and your life since the conviction. Use the guide below to see how the same application can draw on different sources.

Detail in Elias's application	Where it belongs	What could support it
A prospective employer stopped considering him after a background review.	Section B. Reasons for seeking pardon.	An employer's letter or a dated account of what happened.
He completed restitution in December 2025.	Sections I and J. Financial information and case background.	A payment history showing the amounts and dates.
He changed how he taught after a participant gave him feedback.	Section C. Community activities.	His dated journal describing the feedback and the revised session.
He continued working in facilities maintenance after release.	Section G. Employment history.	An employment record or a supervisor's firsthand account of his work.
A former participant describes how Elias followed up after release.	Section M. Letters of support.	The participant's signed letter describing conversations and actions he remembers.

Adapted from Prison Professors, "Sample Pardon Application," November 2026, Sections B, C, G, I and J, Continuations A–C, and letters M1–M3.

Pause and write.

- Choose one detail you might include. Where would a reader look to confirm it, and what would you still need to explain yourself?

Describe your contribution and give others credit for their work

In August 2021, a participant told Elias that a teaching example didn't fit his circumstances. Elias recorded the feedback in his journal. For the next session, he prepared several options and asked people to explain which one they would use. The date and the change he made tell the reader how he responded to feedback.

In the fictional packet, Elias reached 56 people through small groups and individual conversations in prison. After release, he stayed in touch with eight. Seven told him they were working. Three of those seven wrote the sample letters. Those numbers describe different things. One counts the people Elias reached, another counts the people who stayed in touch, and another records what some of them later reported. Each participant can explain the steps he took to find and keep work.

Pause and write.

- Think of a time you helped someone work toward a goal. How would you describe your part and leave room for the other person to describe their own decisions?

Ask for letters based on firsthand experience

Marcus Vale writes that Elias helped him choose one decision to reflect on each week. After Marcus started a warehouse job, he told Elias that he struggled to arrive on time. Marcus describes what he did next. He began arranging transportation the night before and spoke with his supervisor when he needed help. The letter gives a reader both a specific example of Elias's follow-up and Marcus's account of his own response.

Andrew Pierce describes how Elias asked him to apply an idea from a book report to his goal of working in maintenance. James Bell recalls how Elias helped him use a weekly schedule as a starting point for balancing work and family. Each writer explains how he knows Elias and gives an example from that relationship.

As you saw in Lesson 6, the pardon form asks you to identify exactly three primary references. They must be unrelated to you by blood or marriage, sign their letters, and be willing to speak with an investigator. The letters in this sample illustrate what firsthand accounts can cover.

Pause and write.

- Who knows you through a responsibility you've held over time? What specific experience could that person describe in their own words?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry. Choose one responsibility or contribution you'd want someone to understand. Describe what you did, how you know what happened, and one step you could take this week to build on it. Set a date to come back and review your progress.

- What responsibility have I taken on, and how have I followed through over time?
- Who has seen part of that work? What could they describe from their own experience?
- What can I do in the next seven days, and what will I look for when I review the result?

In Lesson 10, you'll use an application log to connect your answers with the records you have and the information you still need.

LESSON 10

Document Your Progress as You Prepare for Clemency

If you worked on a clemency application today, could you find a record of what you were doing two years ago? You might remember a course you completed or someone you helped. A dated entry can take you back to the details, including what you wanted to accomplish, what you tried, and what you changed after you saw the result.

While I served my sentence, I earned university degrees and published work on prison and sentencing reform. When I shared that work, people had something specific to read and discuss with me. Some of those relationships became part of a coalition of support. As you look back over the work you've done in this workbook, think about which details you'd want to be able to find again.

Start with two questions.

- What have I done that I'd want to explain to a future reader?
- What could I write down today that would help me remember the details a year from now?

Record a decision while you remember it

Start in a notebook or on a sheet of paper. Put the date at the top. Give the reader enough context to understand what you were trying to do. Describe the decision you made, what happened afterward, and what you plan to do next.

In Lesson 9, Elias Ward wrote about a participant who told him a teaching example didn't fit his circumstances. Elias changed the next session and gave people more than one option to consider. If he returned to that entry a year later, he could see what prompted him to change his approach. A record that only listed the session date and attendance would answer a different question.

A journal entry, a book report, and a release plan can help you record different parts of the same effort. Use the journal to explain a decision. Use a book report to describe how you tried an idea from your reading. When the result affects your plans for work or life after prison, update your release plan to show what changed.

Pause and write.

- Which decision is still fresh in your mind? What would you want to remember about it if you came back to your notes next year?

Turn an entry into a record and start your free profile

See Appendix C, pages 103–104, for a journal example and a sample letter you can adapt.

Give each open item a next action

Use an application log when you need to find records or finish answers over several weeks. Each entry can name the task, the date you acted, the record you used or requested, and the next step. A status such as planned, waiting, or done helps you see where to start when you come back. Give an open item a date to check it again.

In the fictional log below, each record has a short label. E04 points to the supervision completion record. E05 points to the release record, and E06 points to the payment ledger. You can use short labels or the full names of your documents. Choose a way to find the record again when you need it.

Task in Elias's log	Status and record	What he'll do with it
Verify release, supervision, and payment dates.	Done. Checked October 21, 2026. Records E04–E06.	Use each date in the answer that asks about it.
Record the copy used in the filing exercise.	Done. Simulated filing November 20, 2026. Copy and sending record E20–E21.	Refer back to the exact set of answers and attachments used in the exercise.
Record the confirmation and case number.	Waiting in the exercise. Review February 20, 2027. Reference E21–E22.	Check whether a confirmation has arrived at the next review.
Review new records and any contact changes.	Planned. Review December 18, 2026. Reference E22.	Identify what has changed and decide whether any information belongs in an update.

Adapted from Prison Professors, "Build Your Pardon Application Log — Elias Ward," Action Log and Evidence Index. The entries describe a fictional exercise.

Pause and write.

- Which item are you ready to put in a log? What will tell you that you've finished it, and when will you check again if it remains open?

Check what a record actually confirms

Elias's log gives him a way to check three dates that answer different questions. He left confinement in September 2021, completed supervision in September 2024, and completed the payments shown in his ledger in December 2025. Writing each date beside its source helps him avoid using one date to answer a question about another event.

In the example, the Probation Office later replies and confirms the supervision end date. Elias records the reply. The date confirmation helps him check his answer about supervision. He would need a separate statement if he wanted to say that someone in the office supported his request.

Review your own draft one answer at a time. If your memory differs from a record, note the question and check the underlying source before you settle on the wording. If you're still waiting for a letter or document, write down what remains open so you can pick up where you left off.

Pause and write.

- Which two dates or events in your own account could be easy to confuse? What source could you use to check each one?

Use the log after you finish a draft

If you decide to apply, use the government's current instructions to assemble and submit your petition. Record the date you send it and keep a copy of the answers and attachments you sent. Add any confirmation and case number when they arrive. If the Office of the Pardon Attorney asks for more information, log what it requested and when you responded.

Your notebook still has a purpose if your petition stays pending or your plans change. An entry about how you handled feedback can help you prepare for a job interview. A revised release plan can help you explain to a family member what you've arranged and what you still need to work out. Return to the record as you make decisions about the life you want to build.

Pause and write.

- Which part of the record you're building could help you with a decision about work, family, or life after prison?

Write your journal entry

Date your entry and choose one action you can take in the next seven days. Set a date to come back. At that review, write down what happened and decide what you'll do next.

- What goal am I preparing for, and why did I choose it?
- What will I do this week, and what could I record so I can explain what I learned?
- When I review this entry, what will help me decide whether to continue or change my approach?

APPENDIX A

Sample Commutation Petition

Daniel Elias Rowan's fictional application and supporting records

Read alongside Lesson 8

Begin with the cover letter, then find the same request in the petition. As you read the attachments, look for the records and letters that give a reviewer more detail about Daniel's conduct, preparation, and release plan.

Find your place in the packet

Material	Workbook page
Packet overview	43
Cover letter	44
Sample petition and its instructions	45–55
Case and accountability statement	56
Dated progress record	57
Biography, journal, book report, and action record	58–59
Release plan, budget, and alternatives	60–61
Three sample support letters	62–64
Supporting-document register and teaching notes	65–66

Use the workbook page numbers in this guide. The reproduced pages also show the original packet numbers and, where applicable, the government form's page numbers.

Fictional course example. Use the current government form for an actual petition.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Sample Commutation Application

A fictional petition and supporting packet
Prepared for classroom use | November 2026

Applicant: **Daniel Elias Rowan**, an invented person. This packet shows how a person serving a federal sentence might connect acceptance of responsibility, sustained preparation, and a practical release plan in a request for commutation.

All applicant facts, case details, dates, achievements, financial information, supporters, observations, and commitments are fictional. Identifiers are intentionally invalid; contact addresses use example.com and sample locations. No signature or oath has been executed. No petition has been submitted.

Prison Professors and the DOJ form are real. Their inclusion does not represent an endorsement, an actual program-completion record, or a promise of clemency. No real profile was created for this applicant.

Packet guide

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The original 11-page government form is preserved and filled. Its printed page numbers remain visible; separate packet numbers appear at the bottom. Inapplicable fields explain why they do not apply. Instructions reflect the supplied December 2023 form, with a printed expiration date of November 30, 2026.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Sample cover letter

FICTIONAL APPLICANT - UNSIGNED TEACHING EXAMPLE

November 15, 2026
Daniel Elias Rowan | Sample BOP number: 00000-000
Federal Institution A (fictional)
100 Institution Example Road, Sample City, OH 00000

To the President of the United States
Through the Office of the Pardon Attorney
U.S. Department of Justice

Re: Request for reduction of imprisonment - fictional case 14-CR-SAMPLE-001

Dear Mr. President:

I respectfully ask that my remaining prison term be reduced to time served, effective 180 days after a grant, to permit an orderly transition. I ask to retain my five years of supervised release and its lawful conditions.

I pleaded guilty to a methamphetamine-distribution conspiracy and received a 240-month prison sentence. I arranged deliveries, handled drugs and money, and recruited two couriers. I knew that my conduct endangered people and damaged families. I continued because I wanted money and status. I accept responsibility for those choices.

During 12 years and 10 months in continuous custody, I have worked to change the habits behind my crime. My adjustment was not flawless. In 2016, I possessed an unauthorized cellphone. Accepting that misconduct became part of learning that responsibility requires consistent conduct, including when a rule is inconvenient.

Prison Professors resources helped me organize that work. I connected values to measurable goals, kept journals, wrote book reports, and revised my release plan. My record includes education, institutional work, service to peers, and more than ten years without a further disciplinary finding in this fictional history. The attached examples show what I learned and how I applied it; they are not offered as proof that writing alone makes someone ready for release.

My proposed transition includes housing with my sister, an entry-level job subject to approval, weekly meetings with a mentor, and a budget with alternatives if employment is delayed. I welcome supervision and understand that trust will require continuing effort.

I ask for consideration of the seriousness of the crime alongside the sustained record that followed. I do not ask to erase the conviction or excuse the harm. I seek the opportunity to continue rebuilding as a law-abiding, contributing citizen. I will continue preparing whether or not relief is granted.

Respectfully,
Daniel Elias Rowan
Fictional applicant; no signature supplied or executed.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

PETITION FOR COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE

Instructions:

This petition form is for seeking commutation (reduction) of the imprisonment and/or supervision portion of your sentence. If you are seeking pardon after completion of your sentence or only remission of financial penalties, please use the applications for those types of requests.

Before filling out the application form, please make sure you meet these 3 requirements:

1) You were convicted in a federal criminal court, NOT a state or military court;
2) A court has imposed a term of federal prison or federal supervision, such as parole, supervised release, or probation, against you; **AND**
3) You do not have any court challenges currently pending against your conviction or sentence, such as a direct appeal or motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255. This requirement does not apply to capital cases.

In the form, you will be asked to give information on your conviction(s) and why you believe you deserve commutation.

Do:

- Answer each question truthfully, accurately, and in your own words.
- Give full, detailed answers to questions to help process your application more quickly.
- Attach additional pages or documents if you need more space or to provide more information.
- Answer every question. If a question does not apply to you, explain why.
- Type or handwrite the petition in ink so that it can be read easily if you are submitting by mail or email; use of the fillable PDF form is preferred.
- Submit attachments in PDF or Word format, if submitting by email.
- Ask that the Bureau of Prisons official submitting your application, if applicable, include copies of your:
    - Presentence report
    - Statement of reasons
    - Judgment
    - Progress report from within the last 18 months

Do NOT:

- Do NOT use this form if you are asking for only remission or pardon after completion of sentence. There are other applications for those types of requests.
- Do NOT use this form if you are asking for commutation of a military sentence; you must apply through the military branch of conviction.
- Do NOT staple, glue, bind, or tape any portion of your application or attached materials.
- Only documents in PDF or Word formats are accepted.

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Office of the Pardon Attorney
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Ways to submit your materials:

- Email documents in PDF or Word format to USPardon.Attorney@usdoj.gov (preferred)
- Mail forms (typed or printed in ink) to U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20530; submissions by mail will take longer to process than submission by other methods

Notices

Your disclosure of information to the Office of the Pardon Attorney on this form is voluntary. However, if you do not complete all of the information fields in this form, we may not be able to process your request.

Immigration status

If you are not a citizen of the United States, you should be aware that commutation of your sentence only shortens the prison sentence and will not result in a change of your immigration status. If a detainer has been lodged against you for deportation or removal, commutation of sentence will not prevent your deportation or removal from the United States and may actually hasten the process.

False statements

A knowing and willful false statement in a document submitted to the government may subject you to criminal punishment, including up to five years' imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. See 18 U.S.C. §§ 1001 and 3571.

No appeal from a denial of clemency

The President alone has the power to commute a sentence for a federal offense. It is an extraordinary remedy that is very rarely granted. You will be notified when a final decision is made on your petition, and there is no appeal from the President's decision to deny a clemency request.

Privacy Act statement

The Office of the Pardon Attorney has authority to collect this information under the United States Constitution, Article II, Section 2 (the pardon clause); Orders of the Attorney General Nos. 1798-93, 58 Fed. Reg. 53658 and 53659 (1993), 2317-2000, 65 Fed. Reg. 48381 (2000), and 2323-2000, 65 Fed. Reg. 58223 and 58224 (2000), codified in 28 C.F.R. §§ 1.1 et seq. (the rules governing petitions for executive clemency); and Order of the Attorney General No. 1012-83, 48 Fed. Reg. 22290 (1983), as codified in 28 C.F.R. §§ 0.35 and 0.36 (the authority of the Office of the Pardon Attorney). The principal purpose for collecting this information is to enable the Office of the Pardon Attorney to process your request for remission. The routine uses which may be made of this information include provision of data to the President and his staff, other governmental entities, and the public. The full list of routine uses for this correspondence can be found in the System of Records Notice titled, “Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records,” published in Federal Register, September 15, 2011, Vol. 76, No. 179, at pages 57078 through 57080; as amended by “Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records,” published in the Federal Register, May 25, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 100, at page 24161, and at the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties’ website.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

If you are granted or denied commutation by the President, your name will be released, including on our website, in accordance with our Freedom of Information Act obligations. Non-public documents, such as this petition and supporting documents, the presentence investigation report, the results of any federal background investigation, and the recommendation of the Department of Justice, are not generally available under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. However, the Pardon Attorney may disclose the contents of executive clemency files in the possession of the Department of Justice when the disclosure is required by law or the ends of justice. Additionally, this office would, if asked, confirm that a specific individual has applied for or was granted or denied clemency.

The President and his immediate staff are not subject to the constraints of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. Accordingly, while clemency-related documents in the possession of the White House traditionally have not been made public, they may be legally disclosed at the discretion of the President. In addition, clemency-related documents retained by the White House at the end of a presidential administration will become part of the President's official library, where they become subject to the disclosure provisions of the Presidential Records Act.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection meets the requirements of 44 U.S.C. § 3507, as amended by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. We estimate that it will take 2 hours to read the instructions, gather the facts, and answer questions. Send only comments relating to our estimate of time burden to: Office of the Pardon Attorney, 950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC, 20530.

Note: Nothing in these instructions is legal advice.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

PETITION FOR COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE

Relief sought:

☑ Reduction of prison sentence

☐ Reduction of prison sentence and remission of fine/restitution

☐ Reduction of supervised release, probation, or parole

To the President of the United States:

The undersigned petitioner, a person subject to federal imprisonment or other restriction, asks for commutation of sentence and in support thereof states as follows:

1. **Identifying information:**

Name: Daniel Elias Rowan
(first) (middle) (last)

Name at Conviction: Daniel Elias Rowan (same name)
(if different) *(first) (middle) (last)*

Date of Birth: 04/18/1982

Place of Birth: Dayton *(city)*, OH *(state)*, USA *(country)*

Social Security No.: 000-00-0000 (sample)

BOP Register No.: 00000-000 (sample)

Sex: ○ Female ◉ Male

Are you Hispanic or Latino? ○ Yes ◉ No

Race: (select all that apply)

☐ Alaska Native or American Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Black or African American

☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☑ White ☐ Other

Are you a U.S. Citizen? ◉ Yes ○ No, N/A - U.S. citizen
(country of citizenship)

Is an attorney helping you with this petition form? ○ Yes ◉ No

Attorney name: N/A - self-represented

Attorney email: N/A - no attorney

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

2. Contact information, if on home confinement or supervised release:

Address: N/A - incarcerated at Federal Institution A (fictional)
(number) (street) (apartment unit no.)

N/A - incarcerated | N/A | N/A
(city) (state) (zip code)

Cell phone: N/A Home phone: N/A Email: N/A - incarcerated

3. Case information:

How did you plead? (●) Guilty ( ) Not guilty ( ) Nolo contendere

Offense Date: 06/2011-12/2013 Conviction Date: 03/28/2014 Sentence Date: 06/20/2014

Case No.: 14-CR-SAMPLE-001 Court:

☑ U.S. District Court for the Southern *(Eastern/Northern, etc.)* District of Ohio *(state)*

☐ Superior Court of the District of Columbia

Offense or crime: Methamphetamine conspiracy; 21 U.S.C. 846 and 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A)
(specific offense(s); provide statute(s) violated, if known)

Sentence: Imprisonment:	Probation or supervised release:	Financial penalties:
Term: 240 months *(years, months)*	Term: 5 years supervised *(years, months)*	Fine: $0 - none
		Restitution: $0 - none
		Assessment: $100
		Date paid: 08/01/2015
		Amount unpaid: $0

When did you begin serving your sentence? 01/15/2014*

What is your projected release date? 09/15/2031*

Are you eligible for parole? No Provide parole eligibility date: N/A - not eligible

Date of last hearing: N/A - no parole Date of next scheduled hearing, if any: N/A - no parole

* Custody credit and projected release date are assumptions for this fictional example; see Attachment A.

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Have you applied for federal clemency before? ◯ Yes ◉ No

Date applied: N/A - first petition

Date of decision: N/A - no prior petition ◯ Granted ◯ Denied ◯ No Action

4. Offense details

Please tell us about the offense for which you are seeking commutation. Be specific and complete. Do not omit facts or minimize your role. We want to hear from you, in your own words. Please include:

- What was your role in the offense?
- How, when, and why did you get involved?
- What actions did you take in connection with the offense? (Include all actions, even if you pleaded guilty to only specific conduct, counts, or portions of the full criminal activity.)
- Do you accept responsibility for your criminal conduct?

From June 2011 through December 2013, I participated in a methamphetamine-distribution conspiracy in southern Ohio. I bought and resold approximately three kilograms of methamphetamine, arranged deliveries, collected payments, stored drugs and cash, and recruited two people to make deliveries. I directed their work and paid them from drug proceeds. I wanted money and status and chose illegal income over lawful employment.

I understood that the drugs could damage people's health, families, and neighborhoods. I continued anyway. I also exposed the people I recruited to prosecution and imprisonment. I did not carry a firearm or commit an assault in this offense, but those facts do not make my conduct harmless.

I pleaded guilty to the conspiracy and accept responsibility for the entire course of conduct, including the deliveries and recruitment described here. My circumstances did not require those choices. I caused them. I seek a reduction based on my subsequent conduct and preparation, not a declaration of innocence. Attachment A provides additional context and identifies the records that would verify a real case.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

5. Other criminal record:

Please list all other arrests and criminal convictions. You may reference your presentence report (PSR) or other official documents, but if there is additional information to report, please provide it below.

I have one earlier arrest and conviction. On May 12, 2006, I was arrested for driving under the influence in Dayton, Ohio. I pleaded guilty in Dayton Municipal Court on July 10, 2006. The fictional case identifier is MUNI-SAMPLE-2006-01. The sentence included 30 days of suspended jail time, one year of probation, a $500 fine, and a license suspension. I paid the fine and completed probation in July 2007. My license was later reinstated.

I have no other arrests, juvenile adjudications, convictions, or pending criminal charges in this fictional history. The current federal arrest occurred on January 15, 2014. There are no other federal cases for which I seek relief.

Separately, I received a prison disciplinary finding for possessing an unauthorized cellphone on September 14, 2016. That was institutional misconduct, not an additional criminal conviction. I disclose it because it matters to my adjustment. I accepted the sanctions and have had no further disciplinary findings through November 15, 2026 in this fictional record. Attachment B explains the work that followed. In a real application, I would provide the complete record rather than rely on this summary alone.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

6. Reasons for seeking clemency

In your own words, tell us why you are seeking commutation of your sentence. If you need more space, you may complete your answer on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this petition.

I request reduction of my remaining prison term to time served, effective 180 days after a grant, to permit an orderly transition. I do not ask to reduce my five-year term of supervised release or erase my conviction.

I have spent 12 years and 10 months in continuous federal custody. That time has required more than endurance. I had to confront the harm I caused and the habits that made further misconduct possible. My 2016 cellphone violation showed that a guilty plea had not yet become a consistent willingness to follow rules. I accepted the consequences and began measuring change through daily conduct.

Since 2022, I have used Prison Professors materials to connect values with written goals and accountable actions. During 2025 and 2026, my portfolio grew to 120 journal entries, 24 book reports, and eight release-plan versions. Those numbers alone do not establish rehabilitation. The useful evidence is what the writing records: correcting an inaccurate work log, responding to conflict without retaliation, learning job skills, and keeping commitments to others.

I ask for consideration because this sustained record is accompanied by a practical plan. My sister offers housing, a prospective employer offers supervised entry-level work, and a community mentor offers weekly accountability meetings. Their letters describe the limits of their knowledge and the conditions of their support. I am prepared to comply with supervision and any lawful conditions of a grant.

I understand that preparation creates no entitlement to clemency. I will continue this work if relief is denied. No direct appeal, section 2255 motion, or other court challenge to this conviction or sentence is pending in this fictional case.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

7. Rehabilitation

Tell us about programs, classes, substance abuse treatment, institutional employment, or other activities that you have completed while in prison that have been meaningful for you.

Note: We will review Bureau of Prisons records as part of your application. You do not need to list every program or activity. However, please DO include information that might not be in those records, such as:

- Mentoring activities
- Leading group meetings or studies
- Staff recommendations from supervisors, chaplains, or program directors

I earned a GED in 2017 and completed nonresidential substance-use education in 2018. Since 2019, I have worked in institutional carpentry, learning measuring, inventory, cleanup, and reporting mistakes. I have not completed RDAP and do not claim an RDAP benefit.

I began receiving printed Prison Professors lessons in 2022 through approved correspondence. The Straight-A Guide helped me turn the goal of becoming trustworthy into specific actions: arrive prepared, record work honestly, ask for feedback, and correct mistakes. I completed a self-directed review of the 30 Preparing for Success After Prison lessons in March 2026. This is a study record, not a claim of an official credential or earned sentence credit.

Beginning in January 2025, my sister helped organize my biography, journals, book reports, and release-plan updates using the Prison Professors profile structure. I wrote the entries myself.

I also help peers practice reading and revise their own goals in an authorized study group. I do not claim to be a counselor or to have caused another person's success. My own learning includes listening when someone declines help.

There have been no disciplinary findings since September 2016 in this fictional record. Attachments B and C show a dated progress summary and selected writing. A real petition should corroborate institutional claims with current BOP records, work evaluations, and authentic statements from people who observed the conduct.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

8. Release plans

Tell us about any plans you may have made for your release, such as where you will live or seek employment. You may also include letters of support from friends, family, and others.

Subject to release and supervision approval, I will live with my sister, Elena Rowan, at 100 Example Lane, Sample City, OH 00000. This is an intentionally fictional address. She offers a private bedroom for 12 months, transportation on release, and a $1,500 transition fund. Her letter explains household rules and temporary help if employment is delayed.

ExampleWorks Cabinetry, a fictional business, offers an entry-level shop-assistant position at $20 per hour for an anticipated 40-hour week. The offer depends on lawful release, required approvals, work authorization and identification, and a confirmed start date. The employer has reviewed my conviction history and sample work plans. I will not handle company money or supervise others initially.

Before release, I will confirm reporting instructions, housing approval, identification needs, transportation, health coverage, and medication continuity if needed. I will report exactly as directed and arrange a community substance-use assessment. I will not wait for a problem before seeking help.

My mentor, Thomas Avery, offers weekly meetings for the first 90 days. I will maintain a written budget, continue journal writing, and review commitments with him and my sister. I will not contact former drug associates or undertake unauthorized travel. I will disclose financial pressure promptly rather than seek quick money.

If the job is delayed, my sister will waive the housing contribution for up to 90 days and provide groceries for 60 days. I will use the public workforce system and seek other lawful work. If the proposed home cannot be approved, I will work with supervising authorities on an approved alternative before release. Attachment D contains the schedule, budget, and contingency plan; Attachments E1-E3 contain the fictional support letters.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Certification and Personal Oath

I hereby certify that all answers to the above questions and all statements contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief. I understand that any intentional misstatements of material facts contained in this application form may cause adverse action on my petition for executive clemency and may subject me to criminal prosecution.

Daniel E. Rowan - SAMPLE, UNSIGNED

(signature of petitioner)

Respectfully submitted this 15 day of November, 2026

(month) *(year)*

No signature or oath has been executed.

The typed applicant name is illustrative. Every applicant fact in this packet is fictional.

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FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment A - Case and accountability

FICTIONAL APPLICANT-PREPARED SUMMARY - NOT A COURT RECORD

Item	Invented case facts
Offense and plea	Methamphetamine conspiracy, 21 U.S.C. 846 and 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A). Guilty plea and conviction: March 28, 2014.
Court and sentence	U.S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio. Sentence imposed June 20, 2014: 240 months in prison and five years of supervised release.
Financial penalties	$0 fine; $0 restitution; $100 assessment, paid August 1, 2015; $0 unpaid.
Custody and projection	Continuous custody began January 15, 2014; the example assumes applicable prior-custody credit. September 15, 2031 is an invented projected release date, not a BOP calculation.
Prior review	No appeal, section 2255 motion, or other challenge is pending. No earlier clemency petition. This sample supplies no invented court order.
Relief requested	Reduce remaining imprisonment to time served, effective 180 days after a grant. Retain five years of supervised release.

What I am responsible for

I used ordinary business skills for an illegal purpose. I kept customer lists, arranged transportation, collected money, and told two couriers where to deliver drugs. I paid them for taking risks that I had helped create. I was not merely present around other people who committed crimes.

I justified the income by saying that customers made their own choices. That explanation ignored my choices: obtaining the drugs, increasing their availability, and profiting from demand. I also lied to my family about the source of my income. The absence of a named restitution recipient does not mean that nobody was harmed.

What reconciliation means in practice

I cannot require anyone to forgive me. My responsibilities include telling the truth, obeying rules, supporting myself lawfully, and helping without expecting recognition. I will not approach victims or affected families without appropriate consent and guidance. I can make my own behavior more reliable regardless of whether anyone endorses my application.

For an actual case, verify the full offense account against the judgment, presentence report, plea materials, and other relevant records. The source documents themselves have not been fabricated for this course.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment B - Progress record

ALL DATES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS BELOW ARE INVENTED

Period	Activity and practical result	Evidence to obtain in a real case
2016	Unauthorized cellphone finding on September 14. Accepted sanctions; began a written record of rules, decisions, and consequences.	Complete disciplinary history, including the adverse finding.
2017-2018	Earned GED; completed nonresidential substance-use education. Learned to ask for help and plan for high-risk situations.	Education transcript and authentic program records.
2019-present	Institutional carpentry assignment. Practices measuring, inventory, cleanup, and prompt error reporting.	Work assignment history and supervisor evaluations.
2022-present	Uses printed Prison Professors lessons received through approved correspondence. Maintains goals and written accountability.	Dated worksheets, correspondence, and original writing.
Jan. 2025-Nov. 2026	Portfolio: three biography versions, 120 journal entries, 24 book reports, and eight release-plan versions.	Dated archive or profile export. This packet contains selected fictional excerpts only.
March 2026	Completed self-directed review of 30 Preparing for Success After Prison lessons. Revised housing, work, and support plans.	Completed lesson work; no official credential is claimed.
2026	Helps peers with reading and their own goals in an authorized study group. Does not provide professional counseling.	Activity logs and firsthand verification if available.
Since Sept. 2016	No additional disciplinary findings through November 15, 2026 in the fictional record.	Current official progress and disciplinary records.

How I use the record

Every month I compare promises with completed actions. A missed commitment remains in the log with an explanation and a corrective step. I separate my own statements from what an instructor, employer, or mentor actually observed. If a record contradicts my memory, I correct my account.

Using educational resources does not itself establish eligibility for sentence credits, placement, release, or clemency. No such benefit is claimed in this example.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment C1 - Biography and journal

FICTIONAL WRITING EXCERPTS - NOT AN EXISTING PUBLIC PROFILE

Biography excerpt | revised June 1, 2026

For years, I confused earning money with becoming successful. I wanted people to see me as capable, and I used that desire to excuse choices I knew were wrong. My crime was not an accident. I arranged drug deliveries, collected money, and recruited people who then faced consequences alongside me.

Prison did not automatically change that thinking. The cellphone violation in 2016 showed how quickly I could return to the idea that a rule should not apply to me. I had to begin with smaller questions: Can I accept an instruction without arguing? Can I admit an error before someone else discovers it? Can I finish useful work when nobody is praising me?

Prison Professors lessons gave me a structure for recording those answers. I began treating a biography as a statement I must keep earning through my conduct. My goals now include lawful work, a stable home, honest relationships, and service that respects other people's choices. I cannot complete those goals in one application. I can show the work I have begun and the steps I intend to continue.

Journal excerpt | April 14, 2026

Today I discovered that I had entered an inventory count before checking the last shelf. The number was wrong. My first thought was to correct the paper quietly so that nobody would know. That would have repeated an old habit: protect the appearance instead of accept responsibility.

I told the work supervisor what I had done, recounted the items, and entered the correction as directed. I lost time and had to explain why the first count was unreliable. That discomfort was part of the lesson. I cannot ask an employer to trust my records after release if I hide mistakes now.

My next action is specific. Before signing tomorrow's count, I will check each storage area against the list. At the end of the week, I will record whether I followed that step every day. I will send this reflection to my mentor and ask him to challenge any language that shifts responsibility away from me.

Evidence distinction: The journal illustrates the applicant's account. A real supervisor statement would need to be independently obtained; none is represented as attached here.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment C2 - Reading into action

FICTIONAL BOOK REPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY RECORD

Book report | October 5, 2026

Book: *Earning Freedom: Conquering a 45-Year Prison Term*, by Michael Santos. This is a real book; the reader and reflection below are fictional.

Why I chose it: I wanted to examine how a person can prepare during a long sentence without assuming that an early release will arrive. My own plans had too often depended on someone else changing my circumstances first.

What I took from the reading: I began thinking about preparation as work that has value even when the outcome remains uncertain. I do not need to imitate another person's life. I need a record that explains my own decisions, the skills I am developing, and the responsibilities I can accept.

How I applied it: I rewrote the employment section of my release plan. Instead of saying that I would start a business, I identified an entry-level position, the skills it requires, the transportation I would need, and a budget based on wages rather than hopes. I asked my mentor to review the assumptions and recorded which ones remained unconfirmed.

What I will measure: Over the next month, I will complete four written work exercises, revise my interview answers, and explain one example of correcting a mistake without making an excuse. I will retain the earlier drafts so that a reader can see what changed.

Selected weekly commitments | October 5-11, 2026

Commitment	Result	Next step
Complete four work exercises	Four completed; one measurement corrected.	Repeat the corrected exercise and explain the error.
Write two journal entries	Two completed.	Ask the mentor to identify one vague claim.
Review household budget	Reviewed; transport estimate increased.	Confirm local transportation before release.
Help a peer revise a goal	One session completed; peer chose his own goal.	Offer help again without taking ownership of his progress.

These are invented excerpts from an imagined archive. They demonstrate how a reading response can lead to observable actions; they are not certifications by the book's author or Prison Professors.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment D1 - Release plan

FICTIONAL PLAN - ALL PLACEMENTS AND SUPPORT REQUIRE CONFIRMATION

Proposed housing, work, and support

Housing: Sister Elena Rowan, 100 Example Lane, Sample City, OH 00000. Private bedroom for 12 months, subject to approval. She offers pickup and a $1,500 transition fund. Address and contact details are illustrative.

Work: ExampleWorks Cabinetry, 300 Example Way, Sample City, OH 00000. Shop-assistant position, $20/hour, anticipated 40 hours/week. Entry-level duties; supervision and safety training. Offer is conditional and will be reconfirmed before release.

Accountability: Thomas Avery, a fictional community mentor, offers weekly meetings for 90 days. I will review appointments, work, spending, and written commitments. I will follow all supervision instructions and avoid former criminal associates.

When	Planned actions and evidence of completion
Before release	Confirm reporting instructions and approval of the residence; reconfirm the job and start date; arrange transportation; identify needed documents, health coverage, and any medication supply. Keep written confirmations.
Release day and first week	Report exactly as directed. Meet household expectations. Obtain or replace identification; establish a phone and lawful banking access; arrange a substance-use assessment and other care as needed. Keep appointment records.
Days 8-30	Begin approved work when cleared; meet the mentor weekly; review the budget with my sister; write two journals per week. Use a calendar for every reporting, work, and care commitment.
Days 31-60	Review attendance and performance with the employer. Update the release plan using actual income and expenses. Address any missed commitment promptly. Continue recommended care and lawful skill development.
Days 61-90	Review housing, work, savings, supervision compliance, and support needs. Plan the next quarter with realistic goals. Begin community service only when appropriate and permitted.

The day ranges describe an applicant's plan, not legal reporting deadlines. Actual reporting instructions and conditions control. The requested 180-day transition period creates planning time; it does not guarantee a particular BOP placement.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment D2 - Budget and alternatives

FICTIONAL ESTIMATES - NO BANK RECORD OR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT IS REAL

At $20/hour for 40 hours/week, estimated gross monthly pay is about $3,467 using 52 weeks divided by 12. I use a conservative planning estimate of **$2,600 take-home pay**. Actual hours, deductions, benefits, and taxes will determine the available amount.

Monthly item after work begins	Planned amount
Household contribution (from month 2)	$450
Food	$350
Transportation	$160
Phone	$50
Health and care expenses	$150
Clothing and personal needs	$100
Family support contribution	$200
Emergency savings	$500
Total planned allocation	$1,960
Unallocated buffer from estimated take-home pay	$640

First-month transition

My sister's fictional letter offers a $1,500 transition fund. Housing is free for the first month, with up to 90 days of waived contributions if employment is delayed. I would prioritize identification, transportation, food, a phone, and necessary care. I would not count future wages as money already available.

If the plan changes

Job delay or reduced hours: Notify my mentor and sister, reduce discretionary spending, contact the public workforce system, and seek other lawful work. My sister offers groceries for 60 days. Review the remaining transition fund weekly.

Housing not approved: Work with supervising authorities and support people on an approved alternative before release. No alternate placement is represented as secured in this example.

Conflict, financial pressure, or substance-use risk: Contact my support people promptly, follow clinical recommendations and supervision requirements, and document the corrective action. I will not conceal a problem to protect the appearance of progress.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment E1 - Mentor support letter

FICTIONAL WRITER, RELATIONSHIP, AND OBSERVATIONS - ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY

November 15, 2026
Thomas Avery, volunteer mentor
Example Community Learning Circle (fictional)
200 Example Lane, Sample City, OH 00000
202-555-0102 | thomas.avery@example.com

Dear Pardon Attorney:

I support Daniel Elias Rowan's request for a commutation of his prison sentence. In this fictional example, I have corresponded with Daniel since January 2022 through approved channels and reviewed his written work regularly. I am not related to him, and I do not speak for Prison Professors, the Bureau of Prisons, or a treatment provider.

Daniel has told me about the methamphetamine conspiracy, including his recruitment of two couriers, and about his 2016 prison cellphone violation. I do not excuse either. My support rests on the pattern I have observed in our exchanges, not on the seriousness with which he describes one good intention.

In April 2026, he sent me a journal about an inaccurate inventory entry. His first draft spent more space explaining the pressure of the assignment than his own decision. I asked him to identify what he had controlled. He rewrote the entry to state that he had entered a count before checking the last shelf, described reporting the error, and proposed a specific checking procedure. I did not witness the workplace event. What I observed directly was his willingness to accept a difficult question and improve the accuracy of his account.

His use of Prison Professors materials has helped give our correspondence structure. He sends goals, reflections, book reports, and changes to his release plan. When an item is incomplete, I ask him to leave it visible and state the next action. Over time, he has become more willing to distinguish completed work from an aspiration. That habit matters when we discuss employment, housing, and the limits of support.

If he is released to the proposed community, I offer a weekly meeting for the first 90 days, subject to any necessary approvals. We would review his calendar, spending plan, job attendance, and written commitments. I will encourage him to address difficulties early and use qualified services when a problem exceeds my role as a volunteer.

I cannot verify every event in his institutional history or guarantee his future conduct. I can describe the sustained effort and increasing candor that I have observed. I respectfully ask that those qualities, together with the official record and a confirmed release plan, receive consideration.

Respectfully,
Thomas Avery
Fictional writer. Unsigned teaching example.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment E2 - Family and housing letter

FICTIONAL WRITER AND SUPPORT COMMITMENTS - ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY

November 15, 2026
Elena Rowan, sister of the fictional applicant
100 Example Lane, Sample City, OH 00000
202-555-0101 | elena.rowan@example.com

Dear Pardon Attorney:

I am Daniel Elias Rowan's sister. I support his request for a reduction of imprisonment, and I offer the specific support described below as part of this fictional teaching example.

Daniel's criminal conduct harmed our family's trust. He concealed the source of his money and expected us to accept explanations that did not make sense. I know that he also harmed people outside our family through the drug distribution and the recruitment of others. I am not asking that those consequences be overlooked.

Our relationship has improved through repeated, ordinary commitments. He now asks what support I can actually provide rather than assuming I can solve every problem. When I could not obtain a document as quickly as he wanted, he acknowledged his frustration without making it my responsibility. He followed up with a realistic request and completed the parts of the work he could do himself.

Since January 2025, I have helped organize his writing using the biography, journal, book-report, and release-plan categories discussed in Prison Professors resources. He writes the material; my role is to preserve dates and arrange it for review. I do not treat a polished paragraph as proof that every statement is correct. I ask questions when dates, claims, or plans need support.

Subject to approval by the appropriate authorities, I offer him a private bedroom in my home for 12 months. I can pick him up on release and provide a $1,500 transition fund. The first month would be rent-free. After that, we plan a $450 monthly household contribution. If employment is delayed, I will waive that contribution for up to 90 days and provide groceries for the first 60 days.

Our household expectations include lawful conduct, no drugs or unauthorized visitors, respect for supervision conditions, a shared calendar, and prompt discussion of problems. I will not cover up violations or provide unlimited financial support. We have discussed that rebuilding trust requires boundaries as well as encouragement.

I hope Daniel receives the opportunity to continue this work in the community. My support reflects the changes I have observed in our relationship and the practical help I can offer. It is not a guarantee. In a real case, these housing and financial commitments would need to be genuine, current, and confirmed before release.

Respectfully,
Elena Rowan
Fictional writer. Unsigned teaching example.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Attachment E3 - Prospective employer letter

FICTIONAL BUSINESS, OFFER, AND OBSERVATIONS - ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY

November 15, 2026
Morgan Vale, operations manager
ExampleWorks Cabinetry (fictional business)
300 Example Way, Sample City, OH 00000
202-555-0103 | morgan.vale@example.com

Dear Pardon Attorney:

I write in support of Daniel Elias Rowan's commutation request and to describe a conditional employment opportunity. I have reviewed his written work plans and participated in two approved calls with him during September and October 2026 in this fictional scenario. I do not claim to know every aspect of his prison adjustment.

Daniel disclosed his methamphetamine-conspiracy conviction and his responsibility for arranging deliveries and recruiting others. He also disclosed the 2016 cellphone violation. Those matters are relevant to an employer's assessment of reliability. We discussed the need to follow instructions, report mistakes, and earn trust through daily performance.

I asked him to explain how he would respond if an inventory count did not match the paperwork. He described stopping to check the discrepancy and informing the supervisor rather than changing the number to make the records agree. In a written exercise, he initially omitted time for cleanup and safety checks. After feedback, he revised the sequence and explained why the first estimate was incomplete. These exchanges do not prove job performance, but they show a willingness to learn and accept correction.

Subject to lawful release, any required approvals, identification and work authorization, and confirmation of a start date, we offer an entry-level shop-assistant position at $20 per hour for an anticipated 40-hour week. We would aim to begin within 14 days after he is available and approved to work. Actual scheduling and business conditions must be reconfirmed before release.

Initial duties would include shop preparation, material handling, cleanup, inventory assistance, and basic tasks under supervision. We would provide safety orientation and review progress at 30, 60, and 90 days. He would not initially handle company money or supervise other employees. The position does not require us to assume skills he has not demonstrated.

I support consideration of his request because a structured job can provide an opportunity to apply preparation to ordinary responsibilities. Our offer has clear expectations: punctuality, truthful records, safe work, and prompt communication about difficulties. It does not depend on publicity, and it does not guarantee continued employment regardless of performance.

Respectfully,
Morgan Vale
Fictional writer and business. Unsigned teaching example; no real job offer.

Attachment F - Supporting-document register

DISTINGUISH TEACHING EXHIBITS FROM RECORDS A REAL PETITION WOULD NEED

Item	Status in this packet	Purpose
Completed form and cover letter	Included; fictional answers	State the requested relief and connect facts to the request.
A. Case/accountability summary	Included; applicant-style illustration	Clarify conduct, sentence, financial amounts, and responsibility.
B. Progress record	Included; invented dates and activities	Organize the timeline and identify corroboration.
C1-C2. Portfolio excerpts	Included; selected fictional writing	Show reflection, correction, learning, and practical application.
D1-D2. Release plan and budget	Included; hypothetical plan	Identify housing, work, support, costs, and alternatives.
E1-E3. Support letters	Included; fictional and unsigned	Demonstrate three perspectives and concrete support.
Judgment and statement of reasons	Not fabricated or attached	Obtain authentic records for an actual petition.
Presentence report	Not fabricated or attached	Use the genuine report and address relevant discrepancies.
Recent BOP progress report	Not fabricated or attached	The supplied form requests a report from within the last 18 months when a BOP official submits the application.
Discipline, education, and work records	Not fabricated or attached	Verify both favorable achievements and adverse history.
Full writing archive and support verification	Not created as real evidence	Retain original entries and authenticate commitments in a real case.

A record is useful when its source is clear

Keep the document title, date, source, relevant form section, and review status together. Mark missing originals as missing. Do not convert an applicant's recollection into an official finding or describe a proposed placement as approved.

Attachment G - Teaching notes and sources

CLASSROOM GUIDANCE - THE FICTIONAL FACTS ARE NOT EVIDENCE

Why this example makes a developed request

- It states the exact relief sought and acknowledges the offense without minimizing the applicant's role.

- It discloses an adverse prison incident and describes the conduct that followed, rather than presenting a flawless history.

- It connects Prison Professors resources to dated work and specific behavior. Participation alone is not presented as a reason release must be granted.

- It includes housing, conditional employment, a budget, support people, and alternatives. Letters explain the writers' actual basis of knowledge within the fictional scenario.

- It labels every invented exhibit and identifies authentic records that would be needed in a real case. No government records, certificates, official endorsements, or signatures have been fabricated.

Important distinctions for the lesson

This is a commutation example, not a pardon application. The sample asks to shorten imprisonment while retaining supervised release. Three support letters were chosen to demonstrate different perspectives; they are not presented as a three-letter minimum imposed by this commutation form. The form permits support letters from friends, family, and others in the release-plan section.

The official instruction pages remain in the packet. Check the government's current form and instructions before preparing a real application. An actual petitioner must provide truthful facts and execute the required certification; the sample-name entry here is not a signature or oath.

Public sources reviewed November 15, 2026

Supplied DOJ commutation form
https://www.justice.gov/pardon/file/960561/dl?inline

DOJ application page
https://www.justice.gov/pardon/apply-clemency

Preparing for Success After Prison
https://www.prisonprofessors.org/lessons/success-after-prison

Straight-A Guide
https://www.prisonprofessors.org/lessons/straight-a-guide

Profile structure and writing
https://www.prisonprofessors.org/lessons/playbook/build-your-profile

APPENDIX B

Sample Pardon Application

Elias Ward's fictional application and supporting records

Read alongside Lesson 9

Start with Elias's reasons for seeking a pardon. Follow his answers into the supporting records and letters to see what each source can tell a reader about his life after conviction.

Find your place in the packet

Material	Workbook page
Packet overview and cover letter	68–69
Sample DOJ application and instructions	70–93
Primary-reference pages in the DOJ form (Section M)	89–91
Application answers, Sections A–J	94–96
Continuation A. Accountability and reasons	96
Continuation B. Service and dated journals	96–97
Continuation C. Life after release and records	97–98
Three primary-reference testimonials, M1–M3	98–99
Certification, authorization, and teaching notes	100

Use the workbook page numbers in this guide. The reproduced DOJ form also shows its original page numbers.

Fictional course example. Use the current government form for an actual petition.

SAMPLE PARDON APPLICATION

FICTIONAL COURSE EXAMPLE • NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Elias Ward | An invented applicant and supporting packet
Prepared for the Prison Professors Executive Clemency course | November 2026

Every person, identifying detail, case fact, date, event, employer, institution, journal, statement and testimonial in this packet is fictional. Addresses use example.com or fictional locations; identifiers are deliberately invalid. No profile, certificate, official record, signature, oath, authorization or actual petition exists. This is a teaching example; readers must use their own truthful information.

PACKET GUIDE

1. Sample cover letter
2. Model application answers, sections A–J
3. Continuation A: offense, accountability and reasons for pardon
4. Continuation B: contribution, profile and dated journal excerpts
5. Continuation C: life after release and evidence register
6. Three fictional primary-reference testimonials, M1–M3
7. Certification, authorization and submission teaching notes

This companion follows the May 2024 DOJ Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence. The application asks for detailed information, signed certification and authorization, and three signed non-relative letters, with exactly three selected as primary references. This teaching packet does not execute any of them. See the current form and instructions when preparing a real application.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

November 20, 2026

Elias Ward
100 Example Lane, Unit 2
Sample City, Ohio 00000
elias.ward@example.com | 202-555-0100

To the President of the United States
Through the Office of the Pardon Attorney

U.S. Department of Justice

Re: Request for pardon after completion of sentence | Fictional case 10-CR-SAMPLE-001

Dear Mr. President:

I respectfully request a pardon for my federal wire-fraud conviction. I seek your forgiveness for decisions that harmed people who trusted me and for the losses my conduct caused. A pardon would not erase what I did. I hope it would recognize the effort I have made to accept responsibility, meet my obligations, and contribute to others.

I submitted false invoices and misrepresented the work for which I requested payment. I knew the invoices contained false information. I continued because I wanted money and feared admitting that my business was failing. Those pressures did not cause me to commit the offense; I chose to deceive people. I accept responsibility for the loss and for the damage to the trust of the people and businesses affected.

During my sentence, I worked to reconcile with society through education, employment, reflection, and service. In 2021, I began using free Prison Professors resources and became an ambassador in this fictional example. I helped more than 50 people learn to use those resources to prepare for responsible lives. I recorded my goals, teaching sessions, mistakes, and lessons in a journal on my Prison Professors profile.

Since my release in September 2021, I have continued working, completed supervision in September 2024, and remained in touch with eight people I met through the educational work. Seven have told me that they are employed and have shared updates about their responsibilities. Three describe their own experiences in the accompanying fictional testimonials. They made their own choices and deserve credit for their progress. I am grateful that I could play a small part as a teacher.

I also seek a pardon because I hope that presidential forgiveness would help me explain my history when pursuing additional work opportunities. I understand that employers and licensing authorities make their own decisions and that no result is assured. I will continue to support my family, work, and serve others regardless of the outcome.

Respectfully,
Elias Ward
Fictional applicant • unsigned; no oath executed

OMB Number: 1123-0016 FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION Expiration Date: 5/31/2027

Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence

What Is a Pardon and How Can It Help You?

Pardon is asking forgiveness from the President.

Pardon **CAN**:

- Restore civil liberties, like the right to vote, or sit on a jury
- Lift barriers to licensing, employment, housing, or education

Pardon **CANNOT:**

- Erase a conviction
- Expunge a conviction

To apply, you should:
• Have a conviction under federal law, D.C. Code, or Uniform Code of Military Justice
• Live in the U.S. or its territories

If you are still serving your sentence, use the commutation application form: justice.gov/pardon/apply-commutation

How to Begin:

Filling out and submitting the application is the first step in a lengthy process. You will be asked to share details about yourself, your reasons for seeking pardon, your current activities, challenges you may be facing because of your conviction, information about your conviction and other criminal history, if any, and letters of support.

It is not required, but it may help to gather these documents, if available, before you start:

1. Presentence investigation report

   This report is prepared by the U.S. Probation Office to help the court with sentencing.
2. Judgment

   This document shows what sentence the court gave you.
3. Statement of reasons

   This document gives the court's reasons for the sentence (not applicable in D.C. Code or military cases).
4. Indictment or Information

   These documents list the charges against you.
5. Case docket report

   The docket lists all the events in the case.

WHERE CAN I FIND DOCUMENTS RELATED TO MY CONVICTION?

You may be able to get the judgment, indictment, information, and case docket report online:

Federal cases: PACER (has fees): uscourts.gov/court-records/find-case-pacer

D.C. cases: dccourts.gov/superior-court/cases-online

For documents that aren't available online, you can contact or go to the court clerk's office:

Federal court clerk's offices: uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/federal-courts-public/court-website-links

D.C. Superior Court: dccourts.gov/superior-court/criminal-division

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

When will the Office of the Pardon Attorney (PARDON) contact you?

The pardon application process can take months or years. We ask that you keep your contact information updated so that we can reach you when needed. Until the notification of the President's final decision, your application is "pending" or open. Messages from PARDON during the process DO NOT predict the final decision. No outcome is guaranteed. Common situations when we may contact you include:

Confirmation Letter	**Follow-Up Letters**	**Background Investigation**	**Notification of Final Decision**
We will send an email or letter confirming your application has been received	We may send emails or letters asking for more information or updates	We will let you know if a background investigation has been started	We will let you know if the President has granted or denied pardon

HELPFUL TIPS

- This application asks for information to help us get a better picture of you and your life. All questions are important. Answer all questions to the best of your knowledge and ability and give as much detail as you can.
- The application asks for a large amount of personal information that may require research and collecting documents from the past. You may need several sessions to complete the application.
- To help us process your application more quickly, if an answer does not apply to you, write "Not Applicable."
- Sending your application as a PDF by email will help us process your application more quickly.
- If you mail the application, stapling, gluing, or taping any part will slow down processing.
- If you need more space, you can add pages or documents.
- If there is information you feel would make your application stronger, include it in additional pages. You can tell us about achievements, like physical fitness training or accomplishments; participation in personal growth, like counseling, therapy, or meditation; or other ways you have spent your time that tell us about who you are today.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Table of Contents

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We need to know who is applying for pardon, to confirm your identity, and to be sure any background investigation is accurate.

B. Reasons for Seeking Pardon……8

We need to understand how your conviction has affected your life and what you hope pardon will change or improve.

Additional Information About Your Life Since Your Conviction (Parts C-I):

We need the questions in sections C-I (pages 9-14) to help us get a better picture of your life since your conviction, including your successes and the challenges you may have faced.

C. Community Activities……9

D. Educational and Licensing Opportunities……10

E. Places Lived……11

F. Military Service……11

G. Job History……12

H. Sobriety and Substance Use……13

I. Financial Information……14

J. Case Background and Other Criminal History……15

We need to make sure we have the correct case and understand your offense conduct. It also gives you a chance to explain any other criminal history that may appear in a background investigation.

K. Certification and Personal Oath……18

We need your signature to know that you are submitting the pardon application willingly and that you have answered the questions accurately, to the best of your ability.

L. Authorization for Release of Information……19

The authorization lets us and any investigators get information and documentation about your life. If we need information about medical or mental health history, we will ask you for a separate authorization.

M. Letters of Support……20

We need to know how you interact with your community, who you are now, and what your life looks like since your conviction. We need at least three letters. If you give us more than three letters, let us know which three will be your primary references. Primary references cannot be related to you by blood or marriage and must be willing to be interviewed during a background investigation.

N. Application Checklist……23

This checklist will help you review your application to make sure it is complete. It also tells you where to submit the application and how to keep your contact information updated.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Know Your Rights and How Your Information Will be Used

Who is collecting this information and what are my rights?

The Office of the Pardon Attorney collects your information to review and make recommendations to the President on pardon applications. The Office is part of the Department of Justice, which is a federal government agency. You have the right not to give information to us. If you do not answer some of the questions, however, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to continue working on your application.

How will my information be used under the Privacy Act?

The principal purpose for collecting this information is to enable the Office of the Pardon Attorney to process and evaluate your request for pardon after completion of sentence. The routine uses which may be made of this information include provision of data to the President and his staff, other governmental entities, and the public. The full list of routine uses for this correspondence can be found in the System of Records Notice titled, "Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records," published in Federal Register, September 15, 2011, Vol. 76, No. 179, at pages 57078 through 57080; as amended by "Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records," published in the Federal Register, May 25, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 100, at page 24161, and at the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties' website.

The Office of the Pardon Attorney has authority to collect this information under the United States

Constitution, Article II, Section 2 (the pardon clause); Orders of the Attorney General Nos. 1798-93, 58 Fed. Reg. 53658 and 53659 (1993), 2317-2000, 65 Fed. Reg. 48381 (2000), and 2323-2000, 65 Fed. Reg. 58223 and 58224 (2000), codified in 28 C.F.R. §§ 1.1 et seq. (the rules governing petitions for pardon after completion of sentence); and Order of the Attorney General No. 1012-83, 48 Fed. Reg. 22290 (1983), as codified in 28 C.F.R. §§ 0.35 and 0.36 (the authority of the Office of the Pardon Attorney).

Can the government publish my information?

If you are granted or denied pardon by the President, your name will be released, including on our website or in response to public information requests, in accordance with our Freedom of Information Act obligations. Non-public documents, such as this petition and supporting documents, the presentence investigation report, the results of any federal background investigation, and the recommendation of the Department of Justice, are not generally available under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. However, the Pardon Attorney may disclose the contents of pardon files in the possession of the Department of Justice when the disclosure is required by law or the ends of justice. Additionally, this office would confirm that a specific individual has applied for or was granted or denied pardon.

The President and his immediate staff are not subject to the constraints of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. Accordingly, while pardon-related documents in the possession of the White House traditionally have not been made public, they may be legally disclosed at the discretion of the President. In addition, pardon-related documents retained by the White House at the end of a presidential administration will become part of the President's official library, where they become subject to the disclosure provisions of the Presidential Records Act.

Answer questions as accurately and as fully as you can, to the best of your knowledge.

Making any intentionally false statements of material facts may be a reason for denying your petition. In addition, the knowing and willful falsification of a document submitted to the government may subject you to criminal punishment, including up to five years' imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. *See* 18 U.S.C. §§ 1001 and 3571.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Public Burden Statement

This collection meets the requirements of 44 U.S.C. § 3507, as amended by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. We estimate that it will take 180 minutes to read the instructions, gather the relevant materials, and answer questions on the form. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Attn: Office of the Pardon Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice, Attn: OMB Number 1123-0016, RFK Building, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20530. The OMB clearance number, 1123-0016, is currently valid. PARDON may not collect this information, and you are not required to respond, unless this number is displayed.

Note: Nothing in this application or instructions is legal advice.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

A. Background Information

a. Applicant information

Full name:

Elias	None	Ward
First name	Middle name (if you have one)	Last name

If different, full legal name at time of conviction:

Elias	None	Ward
First name	Middle Name (if you have one)	Last name

None	000-00-0000 (invalid)
Other names (married, maiden, aliases, etc.)	Social security number

04/12/1975	United States	Sample City, OH
Date of birth (Month, Day, Year)	Country where you were born	City and state where you were born

Martin Ward (fictional)

Parent #1's full name (maiden name in parentheses)

Helen Ward (fictional)

Parents #2's full name (maiden name in parentheses)

Citizenship:

- (●) U.S. citizen by birth
- ( ) U.S. naturalized citizen
- ( ) _____ Other nationality

b. Contact information

100 Example Lane	Unit 2	Sample City, OH	00000
Street address	Apartment/Unit	City, State	Zip code

Email is the best way to contact you. If you do not have email, you can give the email of a person you trust, or your phone number. If an attorney is helping you with this application, also give their information:

elias.ward@example.com	202-555-0100
Your email address or email of a trusted person	Phone number

None	Not applicable
Name of attorney helping with this application	Attorney's email address and phone number

c. Previous applications

Have you applied for federal commutation or pardon before?

☐ Yes Date applied (month/year): _____

☐ No Date of decision (month/year): _____

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

d. Sex and race. This information is for statistical data collection purposes:

Are you Hispanic or Latino?	**Race** (select all that apply):		**Sex**
☐ Yes	☐ Alaska Native or American Indian	☐ Asian	☒ Female
☐ No	☐ Black or African American	☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	☐ Male
	☐ White	☐ Other	

e. Family information. For this section, it would be helpful to have dates for:

- Your marriage (if applicable)
- Your divorce (if applicable)
- Your children's birth dates (if applicable)

Current marital status

☐ Civil union/domestic partnership

☐ Divorced ☐ Married

☒ Never Married ☐ Separated

☐ Widowed

Current spouse / partner information, if applicable:

Spouse / partner name

Date of marriage or civil union/domestic partnership

Place of marriage or civil union/domestic partnership

Child or dependent information, if applicable:

Full name of child or dependent	Date of birth	Name(s) of other parent(s)	Do you have custody? (Y/N)

Former spouse or partner information, if applicable:

Former spouse or partner name

Phone number

Date of marriage or civil union/domestic partnership

Date of divorce

Place of marriage or civil union/domestic partnership

Place of divorce

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

B. Reasons for Seeking Pardon

What are your reasons for seeking pardon?

The more specific you can be, the better. Use the space below and/or attach additional pages.

You may want to include:

- How your life would change if granted pardon
- Challenges that you have faced because of your conviction

If you have ever been denied a job, license, or other opportunity because of your conviction, attaching denial letters or related documents will help us review your application

I request forgiveness. See Continuation A for reasons and the employment example.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

C. Community Activities

How have you been involved in your community since your conviction?

"Community" can include family, neighborhood, city, prison community, or organizations and associations. If you have more than three activities, attach additional pages. Some examples are:

- Assisting in extracurricular and education-related activities of children and grandchildren
- Providing support to community members, such as neighbors and family members
- Providing care to an aging relative
- Service with a civic or religious organization or a professional association
- Involvement in the prison community, including as tutor, mentor, or suicide watch companion

If you have not been able to participate in these activities, explain below.

Description of activity	Approximate start and end dates (year to year)
Prison Professors resource ambassador; taught 56 people	2021
Continued contact with eight former participants	2021-2026
Volunteer, Sample Community Food Pantry	2022-2026

Who can tell us about your participation in the above activities?

Name(s)	Contact information
Nina Cross, fictional volunteer coordinator	nina.cross@example.com

Is there anything you would like us to know about your reasons for engaging in community activities? If you have not been able to participate in these activities, you can let us know why here.

I seek to rebuild trust through service. See Continuation B.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

D. Educational and Licensing Opportunities

What educational or licensing opportunities have you had?

These can be programs you have started or completed, including courses you completed and licenses you earned while incarcerated. Some examples are:

- College correspondence courses
- Associate, bachelor, master programs
- Department of Labor courses
- Certificate programs
- Vocational training
- Commercial driver's license (CDL) courses
- Licenses: cosmetology, real estate, nursing, teaching, welding, electrician, or other

If you need more space, attach additional pages.

School or program name	Subject studied and degree or certification received	Approximate dates attended (month/year to month/year)
Institution adult education	Bookkeeping; fictional certificate	2014–2015
Institution vocational program	Facilities maintenance; completion	2019–2020

License Type	Approximate date issued (year)
None	

We know that people with a criminal record may have trouble getting into educational programs or receiving licenses. If that applies to you, give details here. If you have them, you can attach any denial or decision letters from licensing officials or related documents.

School or program name or license type	Details	Approximate date of denial or when informed not eligible (year)
Maintenance credential inquiry	Information requested; no denial or approval	2025 inquiry

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

E. Places Lived

Where have you lived in the last three years?

We already have your current address from your background information.

- Do not use P.O. Boxes.
- Give apartment/unit numbers.
- Do not leave any gaps in dates.
- If you have lived in more than three places, attach additional pages.

If there were any periods where you did not have housing, you can note that below.

Street address	Apartment /Unit	City, state	Zip code	Approximate dates living there (month/ year to month/year)
100 Example Lane	Unit 2	Sample City, OH	00000	10/2021-present

If you are experiencing homelessness or have in the past, note the dates.

None

(month/year to month/year)

F. Military Service

Have you served in the military? ☒ Not applicable

Dates of service

Branch(es)

Serial number

Type of discharge

Tell us briefly about your military service. For example, any tours of duty, time overseas or in active combat, disciplinary sanctions or military criminal proceedings taken against you, commendations or medals awarded to you, or other notable achievements. If available, attach a copy of your DD-214.

Not applicable; no military service.

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

G. Job History

Where have you worked in the last seven years?

- Include full and part-time jobs
- If applicable, include jobs while incarcerated
- Use approximate dates
- Do not leave any gaps in dates
- If you have had more than three jobs, attach additional pages
- If you are retired, give the approximate date your retirement began in the "Current employer" section

Example Facilities Services	Facilities services	Facilities technician	10/2021
Current employer	Type of business	Position	Month/year started
200 Example Way	Sample City, OH	00000	Morgan Reed, 202-555-0105
Employer street address	City, state	Zip code	Supervisor name and phone number

Previous employer name	Type of business	Position	Employer address and phone number	Approximate dates worked (month/year to month/year)
Institution facilities department	Institutional work	Maintenance worker	Fictional institution; 00000	11/2019-09/2021

If you are currently unemployed or have been in the past, give the dates and share how you supported yourself during that time.

No gaps in the fictional seven-year work history.

If your criminal record has affected your ability to find work, give details here. If you received a rejection letter or termination notice because of your conviction, you can attach a copy.

An employer declined after a 2022 background review. See Section B.

Your work history will be reviewed as part of any background investigation. If you have been fired, accused of misconduct at a job, or given an unsatisfactory job performance rating, give details here.

No fictional firing, misconduct allegation or unsatisfactory rating.

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

H. Sobriety and Substance Use

Have you struggled with substance use? ☒ Not applicable

We know that many people have struggled with substance use and that this can be difficult to discuss. Your honest reflection is helpful to us.

Type of drug or alcohol	How often were you using?	Approximate dates used (month/year to month/year)

If you have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder, give details here.

Diagnosis

Date of diagnosis (month/year)

Give information on any counseling or treatment you received or rehabilitation program you attended for substance use.

Facility/counselor/doctor name

When did you attend? (month/year to month/year)

Street address

Suite no.

City, state

Zip code

Phone number

Email address

How long have you been sober?

Days, months, or years

Is there anything else you would like to share about your history with sobriety and substance use?

Not applicable in this fictional history.

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

I. Financial Information

Do you have any debts that are late or in default (including child support payments) or do you have any bankruptcy filings?

We know that criminal convictions may affect some people's ability to get a job and may carry heavy financial penalties, making it harder to keep up with necessary expenses. We know this can be a hard subject to discuss. Your honest reflection is helpful to us.

- Note: A credit report will be reviewed if a background investigation is started.

Description of debt that is late or in default	Approximately how much is the debt?
None	

Court where bankruptcy filed	Approximate year bankruptcy filed and outcome	Approximately how much debt did you want to discharge?
None		

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with finances since your conviction?

This may include information on why you are unable to pay the above debts or filed for bankruptcy and any plans to catch up on payments for any debts that are late or in default.

Fictional restitution and assessment paid in 12/2025. See Section I.

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

J. Case Background and Other Criminal History

a. Give basic information on the conviction for which you are seeking pardon.

If you are seeking pardon for more than one conviction, attach additional pages.

It is not required, but, if available, sending a copy of these documents with your application will help us review your case more quickly. See cover page for more information.

- Presentence report
- Judgment
- Statement of reasons
- Indictment or Information
- Case docket report

☐ Check here if you are attaching any of these documents.

Did you plead guilty? ☒ Yes ☐ No

01/2008-12/2009	01/2011
Approximate date(s) of offense (month/year to month/year)	Approximate date you were sentenced (month/year)

U.S. District Court, fictional district	10-CR-SAMPLE-001
Court where you were prosecuted (D.C. Superior Court, military court, or name of U.S. District Court)	Case number

Wire fraud, 18 U.S.C. section 1343 (fictional)

Of what were you convicted?

What sentence did you receive? (fill in where applicable)

Imprisonment:	144 months	09/2021
	Prison sentence (months or years)	Approximate date you were released from prison, community confinement, or home detention (month/year)
Probation or supervised release:	3 years supervised release	09/2024
	Sentence for probation or supervised release (months or years)	Approximate date you completed your term of probation or supervised release (month/year)

Financial penalties:	$100	None	$24,000
	Assessment amount	Fine amount	Restitution amount

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

b. Tell us about your conduct for which you were convicted.

We want to hear from you, in your own words. The more specific and complete you are, the more helpful it is to us. We are specifically looking for information that is NOT in the public record of your case. You may wish to answer the following:

- What was your role in the offense?
- How, when, and why did you get involved?
- What actions did you take in connection with the offense? (Include all actions, even if you pleaded guilty to only specific conduct, counts, or portions of the full criminal activity.)

I knowingly sent false invoices. See Continuation A for full details.

Do you accept responsibility for your conduct? Explain why or why not.

I accept responsibility; financial pressure does not excuse my choices.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

c. Tell us about any other criminal history.

Your criminal history will be reviewed as part of any background investigation. List any other arrests or convictions that may appear on your criminal history record, if any, including juvenile and expunged records, and give any information you would like us to know about them. If you have your presentence report, you may attach it and give missing or additional information you would like us to know below.

None in this fictional history, including juvenile and expunged matters.

☐ Check here if you are attaching additional pages. Add the section name to the top of each page.

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

K. Certification and Personal Oath

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that all information in my petition and any document submitted with it were given or authorized by me and that I reviewed and understand the information contained in, and submitted with, my petition. I further certify, under penalty of perjury, that all the information I gave in the application is complete, true, and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

In petitioning the President of the United States for pardon, I do solemnly swear that I will be law-abiding and will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and that I take this obligation freely and without any mental reservation whatsoever.

Respectfully submitted this _____ day of _____ , _____ .
Day Month Year

_____
Your signature

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

L. Authorization for Release of Information

Carefully read this authorization, and if you agree, sign and date in ink.

I authorize any investigator, special agent, or other duly accredited representative of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, and any other authorized Federal agency, to obtain any information relating to my activities from schools, residential management agents, employers, criminal justice agencies, retail business establishments, courts, or other sources of information. This information may include, but is not limited to, my academic, residential, achievement, performance, attendance, disciplinary, employment history, criminal history, arrest, conviction, including the presentence investigation report, if any, medical, psychiatric/psychological, health care, and financial and credit information.

I understand that, for financial or lending institutions and certain other sources of information, a separate specific release may be needed (pursuant to their request or as may be required by law), and I may be contacted for such a release at a later date.

I further authorize the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, and any other authorized Federal agency, to request criminal record information about me from criminal justice agencies for the purpose of determining my suitability for a government benefit.

I authorize custodians of records and sources of information pertaining to me to release such information upon request of the investigator, special agent, or other duly accredited representative of any Federal agency authorized above regardless of any previous agreement to the contrary. I understand that the information released by records custodians and sources of information is for official use by the Federal Government only for the purposes of processing my application for a government benefit, and may be redisclosed by the Government only as authorized by law.

Copies of this authorization that show my signature are as valid as the original release signed by me. If not previously revoked in writing, this Authorization is valid and shall remain in effect so long as I am under consideration for a government benefit.

Signature (sign in ink)		
Full Name (type or print legibly) Elias Ward (fictional; unsigned)		*Date Signed*
Other Names Used None		
Street Address 100 Example Lane		
City Sample City	*State* OH	*ZIP Code* 00000
Home Telephone Number (include area code) 202-555-0100	*Social Security Number* 000-00-0000 (invalid)	

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

M. Letter of Support

☒ Primary reference (select exactly 3)

on behalf of Elias Ward
Name of petitioner

I certify that I have personally known the petitioner for 5 years and am not related to petitioner by blood or marriage.

In support of this pardon petition, I state the below:

NOTE: The information below should be based on your personal knowledge of the petitioner. Helpful information includes:

- How you know the individual,
- What you know of their reputation and conduct since their conviction, and
- Their personal and professional activities, including at work, at home, and in the community.

Please see fictional testimonial M1, attached.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages.

I affirm that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

	Marcus Vale (fictional)
Signature	Print Name
	100 Example Road, Sample City, OH 00000
Date	Address
	202-555-0101
	Phone number
	marcus.vale@example.com
	Email address

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

M. Letter of Support

☒ Primary reference (select exactly 3)

on behalf of Elias Ward

Name of petitioner

I certify that I have personally known the petitioner for 5 years and am not related to petitioner by blood or marriage.

In support of this pardon petition, I state the below:

NOTE: The information below should be based on your personal knowledge of the petitioner. Helpful information includes:

- How you know the individual,
- What you know of their reputation and conduct since their conviction, and
- Their personal and professional activities, including at work, at home, and in the community.

Please see fictional testimonial M2, attached.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages.

I affirm that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

	Andrew Pierce (fictional)
Signature	Print Name
	200 Example Road, Sample City, OH 00000
Date	Address
	202-555-0102
	Phone number
	andrew.pierce@example.com
	Email address

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

M. Letter of Support

☒ Primary reference (select exactly 3)

on behalf of Elias Ward
Name of petitioner

I certify that I have personally known the petitioner for 5 years and am not related to petitioner by blood or marriage.

In support of this pardon petition, I state the below:

NOTE: The information below should be based on your personal knowledge of the petitioner. Helpful information includes:

- How you know the individual,
- What you know of their reputation and conduct since their conviction, and
- Their personal and professional activities, including at work, at home, and in the community.

Please see fictional testimonial M3, attached.

☒ Check here if you are attaching additional pages.

I affirm that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

	James Bell (fictional)
Signature	Print Name
	300 Example Road, Sample City, OH 00000
Date	Address
	202-555-0103
	Phone number
	james.bell@example.com
	Email address

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

N. Application Checklist

1. Gather the following information.

Required

- ☐ Application form (pages 6-17)
- ☐ Signed certification and personal oath (page 18)
- ☐ Signed and completed Authorization for Release of Information form (page 19)
- ☐ 3 signed letters of support from non-relatives (pages 20-22)
  Note: You MUST select exactly 3 as your primary letters

Optional

- ☐ Official records: presentence report, judgment, statement of reasons, indictment or information, or court docket record
- ☐ Personal records supporting answers
- ☐ Additional pages to complete answers
- ☐ Additional pages with any information you feel would make your application stronger.

2. Submit your application.

NOTE: Keep a copy of everything you submit for your personal records

For general pardon applications

The fastest way to submit your application is by email. If you send it by mail, it may take longer to process.

By email

Email documents in PDF or Word format to USPardon.Attorney@usdoj.gov

By mail

U.S. Dep't of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

For pardon of a general court-martial conviction only

Submit your application to the military department that had original jurisdiction in your case.
NOTE: Send a single PDF not exceeding 10 MB in size

U.S. Army:
Office of the Judge Advocate General
ATTN: Criminal Law Division, (DAJA-CL)
2200 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-200
usarmy.pentagon.hgda-otjag.list.cld-ops-army-executive-pardons@army.mil

U.S. Navy/U.S. Marine Corps:
Office of the Judge Advocate General
Criminal Law Division (Code 20)
1254 Charles Morris Street S.E., Suite B01
Washington Navy Yard, D.C. 20374

NavyPardonRequests@us.navy.mil

U.S. Air Force:
Office of the Judge Advocate General
Attention: AF/JAJI
1500 W. Perimeter Road, Suite 1300
Joint Base Andrews
Naval Air Facility, MD 20762
AF.JAJIWorkflow@us.af.mil

U.S. Coast Guard:
Commandant (CG-LMJ)
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20032

HQS-DG-LST-CG-LMJ@uscg.mil

NOTE: Pardon of a military offense will not change the character of a military discharge

FICTIONAL COURSE SAMPLE - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

3. Keep your contact information updated.

We will need to reach you during the pardon process. If your contact information changes, email us at USPardon.Attorney@usdoj.gov or send a letter to our mailing address.

The application process:

1. **Confirmation letter** – We will send an email or letter letting you know we received your application and if it is missing any parts. If you have not received a confirmation after **three months**, email USPardon.Attorney@usdoj.gov (preferred) or send a letter to our mailing address. You can check the status of your case on the Pardon Attorney's website: justice.gov/pardon/search-clemency-case-status.
2. **Follow-up letters** – It may take some time for review of your application to start. During the review, we may need more information or updates to your application. If we do, we will contact you by email (preferred) or mail.
3. **Background investigation** – During the review of your application, a background investigation may be necessary. The investigation is conducted by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). We will let you know by email (preferred) or mail if we have asked for a background investigation. It may include interviews of you, the people who wrote your letters of support, neighbors, former and present employers, acquaintances, and other individuals who may be able to give relevant information about you. The agent will be discreet and make reasonable efforts not to disclose the reason for the investigation, but we cannot guarantee that those interviewed will not learn that you are seeking pardon for a past criminal conviction.
4. **Notification of final decision** – You will be notified when a final decision is made by the President. This may take years. No hearing will be held and there is no appeal from the President's decision to deny a request for pardon.

MODEL ANSWERS TO THE APPLICATION

The entries below show how fictional answers correspond to the government form. They are not official records. A real applicant should use the current form and provide complete, accurate information.

A. Background information
Name: Elias Ward. Name at conviction: Elias Ward. Other names: none in this fictional history. Date of birth: April 12, 1975. Birthplace: Sample City, Ohio, United States. Citizenship: U.S. Social Security number: 000-00-0000, intentionally invalid. Current address: 100 Example Lane, Unit 2, Sample City, OH 00000. Email: elias.ward@example.com. Phone: 202-555-0100. All identifying and contact details are invented.
Parents: fictional names Martin Ward and Helen Ward. Marital status: never married. No children or dependents in the fictional history. No former spouse or domestic partner. No attorney assisted. No prior federal clemency application.

B. Reasons for seeking pardon
I ask for presidential forgiveness for my wire-fraud conviction and hope to show the person I have worked to become through decisions over time. My conviction has required me to explain my record during employment applications. A fictional employer declined to proceed after a background review in 2022; I do not represent that a pardon would have changed that employer's decision. I hope a pardon may help me present my history when seeking additional work. I do not claim that it would erase my conviction or guarantee employment or a license. See Continuation A.

C. Community activities
June–September 2021: Prison Professors ambassador in a fictional institution. I introduced 56 people to free lessons and profile-building resources through small groups and individual conversations. I documented the work in my fictional profile journal.
October 2021–November 2026: Continued correspondence or contact with eight former participants. Seven report that they are employed; I do not attribute their employment solely to my teaching. Three non-relatives provide fictional first-person accounts. The eighth participant's employment status is not represented.
2022–2026: Volunteer at the fictional Sample Community Food Pantry, assisting with inventory and distribution twice monthly. Fictional contact: volunteer coordinator Nina Cross, nina.cross@example.com, 202-555-0104.
Reason for involvement: I wanted to rebuild trust through reliable service and make the resources I found useful available to others. See Continuation B.

D. Education and licensing
2014–2015: Fictional institutional adult education course, bookkeeping fundamentals; certificate assumed only for teaching. 2019–2020: fictional vocational coursework in facilities maintenance; completion record assumed. No professional license claimed. A 2025 inquiry about a fictional building-maintenance credential produced a request for additional information, not a denial or

promise of approval. A real applicant would identify the authority and provide actual correspondence.

E. Places lived
October 2021–present: 100 Example Lane, Unit 2, Sample City, OH 00000, a fictional residence. No other residences or periods of homelessness in the preceding three years in this example.

F. Military service
Not applicable. The fictional applicant did not serve in the military.

G. Employment history
October 2021–present: Example Facilities Services, Sample City, OH 00000; maintenance assistant and later facilities technician. Fictional supervisor Morgan Reed, 202-555-0105. Duties: preventive maintenance, work orders, safety checks and reporting.
November 2019–September 2021: institutional facilities work while incarcerated. There are no fictional gaps in this seven-year work history. The 2022 background-review rejection described in section B did not interrupt the existing fictional job. No firing, misconduct allegation or unsatisfactory rating is asserted in this example.

H. Sobriety and substance use
Not applicable in the fictional history: the applicant reports no history of substance-use disorder or treatment. Do not copy this answer; a real applicant should respond based on personal facts.

I. Financial information
The fictional $100 special assessment and $24,000 restitution were paid in full by December 2025; no fine was imposed. No late or defaulted debt, unpaid child support, or bankruptcy is reported in this invented history. No financial records are fabricated or attached. In an actual petition, obtain the payment history and disclose all applicable debts or filings.

J. Case background and criminal history
Guilty plea: yes. Offense period: January 2008–December 2009. Sentence date: January 2011. Court: U.S. District Court, fictional district and case 10-CR-SAMPLE-001. Conviction: wire fraud, 18 U.S.C. § 1343. Sentence: 144 months' imprisonment, three years' supervised release, $100 assessment, $24,000 restitution, no fine. Released from confinement September 2021; supervision completed September 2024. All dates, court, case number and amounts are fictional teaching facts.
Conduct: I knowingly transmitted false invoices to obtain payment for services that had not been performed. I prepared the invoices, sent them, and used the money to keep my business operating and pay personal expenses. My actions caused financial loss to the customer and burdened people who relied on honest business records. See Continuation A.
Responsibility: I accept responsibility. Financial strain and fear help explain the setting; they do not excuse my decisions. I concealed the truth instead of addressing the problem.

Other criminal history: none in this fictional scenario, including juvenile arrests, expunged matters and other convictions. Real applicants must report the history requested by the current form.

CONTINUATION A — ACCOUNTABILITY AND REASONS FOR PARDON

I wanted my business to succeed, but by 2008 I had taken on obligations that I could not meet. Rather than tell the customer that work was incomplete, I prepared invoices that falsely represented services as finished. I transmitted the invoices and accepted payment. I used some of the money to cover business expenses and some for personal needs.

My customer had a right to accurate records and an honest account of the work. My decisions caused a financial loss, created work for people who had to identify the discrepancies, and damaged confidence in the business relationship. I cannot describe repayment as if it removes the effects of my conduct. In this fictional history I completed restitution, and I would provide the actual payment record in a real application.

Prison gave me time to examine how my choices affected other people. I could not undo the offense, but I could respond to it. I studied, held institutional jobs, wrote about decisions, and learned to accept correction. Near the end of my sentence, I found Prison Professors resources that helped me organize goals and explain what I was doing to prepare for life after release.

I request a pardon because I seek forgiveness and hope that a review of my life will include the work that followed my conviction. I understand that a pardon would not erase my conviction, establish innocence, guarantee a job, or transfer credit for another person’s choices to me. I will continue meeting my responsibilities whatever decision the President makes.

CONTINUATION B — SERVICE, JOURNAL AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

In this fictional example I became an ambassador by introducing free Prison Professors lessons and profile tools to people in my prison community. From June through September 2021, I led or assisted with small-group sessions and individual conversations reaching 56 people. I encouraged each person to identify a goal, describe the steps under his own control, and use a journal or other record to review progress. The count represents imagined attendance, not a verified Prison Professors program record or official endorsement.

After release I kept in touch with eight of those people. Seven told me that they were working and described responsibilities such as arriving on time, supporting family, and continuing to learn. Three of those seven provide the fictional testimonials in this packet. Their statements tell readers what each writer personally experienced; the four other reported outcomes remain my fictional account, not independently verified exhibits. I cannot claim that my teaching caused any person's employment.

Selected fictional journal entry — June 25, 2021
Today I introduced a small group to the idea of working backward from a goal. One person wanted to find work after release but had not identified a skill or a first step. I asked him to choose a job, list one skill it required, and describe how he could begin learning. I wrote down that I need to ask better questions instead of telling people what their plans should be.

Selected fictional journal entry — August 20, 2021
A participant told me that one of my examples did not fit his circumstances. He was right. I revised the next session to offer several choices and asked participants to explain what they would use. I recorded the change because I want to teach in a way that respects the experience and judgment of each person.

Selected fictional journal entry — September 30, 2022
After release I spoke with a former participant who described working through a difficult first month at a new job. He credited the planning exercise for helping him set a routine, but his attendance and decisions belonged to him. I wrote down a goal to follow up next month and ask what support he wanted rather than assume.

CONTINUATION C — LIFE AFTER RELEASE AND SUPPORTING RECORDS

I began work at Example Facilities Services in October 2021. My fictional supervisor can describe how I report a maintenance problem, follow safety procedures, and communicate when an assignment takes longer than expected. I completed supervision in September 2024. I continue to volunteer at a food pantry and keep a budget for household costs and savings.

Record register for a real application:
• Judgment, statement of reasons, presentence report and case docket: obtain authentic records; none are manufactured here.
• Release and supervision completion: obtain actual documents; dates in this sample are invented.
• Restitution and assessment: obtain a payment history before asserting amounts or completion.
• Employment and community service: request genuine records and first-person statements from people with direct knowledge.

• Journal and profile: preserve dated original entries and select relevant excerpts; a profile does not itself submit an application.
• Supporters: three fictional non-relative writers appear below. In a real case select exactly three qualifying primary references; each must sign and be willing to be interviewed. Additional relevant letters may be included as directed by the current form.
• Actual signatures and authorization: not executed in this example.

M1 — TESTIMONIAL OF MARCUS VALE

Fictional primary reference • unrelated by blood or marriage • unsigned

I met Elias Ward in June 2021 in a fictional prison education group. He showed me how to use free Prison Professors lessons to make a plan for work and record what I completed each week. I remember telling him that I did not know what to write about because I had never kept a journal. He suggested I start with one decision I wanted to make and return to it after a week. He did not write the answer for me.

After my release, I stayed in touch with Elias. I told him when I started work at a fictional warehouse and when I had trouble arriving on time during the first month. He asked me what I could change. I began arranging transportation the night before and told my supervisor when I needed help. I remain employed in this example, and I am responsible for the decisions that helped me keep the job.

I am grateful that Elias treated my plan as my own and continued to ask about it after we left prison. I know about his efforts from our sessions and later conversations. I have not observed every part of his life and cannot speak for the other participants. I support his request for a pardon based on the care and consistency I have personally observed. In this fictional scenario, I would be willing to speak with an investigator.

Marcus Vale | Fictional writer; no signature or affirmation executed.

M2 — TESTIMONIAL OF ANDREW PIERCE

Fictional primary reference • unrelated by blood or marriage • unsigned

I came to know Elias Ward in a fictional group in July 2021. He introduced me to the Prison Professors book-report format. He asked what I had learned from a book and how I might apply one idea rather than simply summarizing its chapters. When I wrote that I wanted to work in maintenance, he suggested that I list the tasks I needed to learn and ask a supervisor for feedback.

We remained in contact after release. In this example I work for a fictional maintenance company. I told Elias that a supervisor had corrected my first attempt at a repair report. I revised the report and began checking my work before turning it in. Elias listened and encouraged me to keep learning. He did not get me the position or perform the work for me.

I appreciate that he continued to treat me as someone capable of taking responsibility. My knowledge comes from our group meetings and the conversations we have kept up since release. I support his petition because I have seen him make time to teach and follow up, even when he had no obligation to do so. In this fictional scenario, I would be willing to speak with an investigator.

Andrew Pierce | Fictional writer; no signature or affirmation executed.

M3 — TESTIMONIAL OF JAMES BELL

Fictional primary reference • unrelated by blood or marriage • unsigned

I met Elias Ward during a fictional Prison Professors resource session in August 2021. I had spoken about wanting to provide for my family, but my plan did not explain how I would manage my time or spending. Elias showed me an example of a weekly schedule and asked me to build one around my own responsibilities.

After release we stayed in touch. I reported that I had found work with a fictional delivery business. I also told him about the challenge of balancing that schedule with family obligations. Our conversations helped me return to the plan and revise it as my circumstances changed. In this example I remain employed, contribute to household expenses, and keep a calendar of family and work commitments.

I am grateful for Elias's willingness to listen and his respect for the fact that I had to do the work myself. I know he has a federal conviction because he discussed his conduct with our group. I cannot independently verify his full case history. I can describe the way he has shown up in our relationship, and I support his request for pardon. In this fictional scenario, I would be willing to speak with an investigator.

James Bell | Fictional writer; no signature or affirmation executed.

CERTIFICATION, AUTHORIZATION AND SUBMISSION — TEACHING NOTES

No signature, personal oath, authorization, primary-reference certification or sworn statement is executed in this sample. In an actual application, follow the current DOJ instructions for the applicant's signature and signed authorization and for the three signed letters. Each reference should write and sign an honest account based on personal knowledge and be willing to be interviewed. A teaching sample cannot substitute for required signed materials.

The government may request or independently review supporting documents. Do not invent official records, certificates or commitments. Follow current instructions when assembling and submitting a real petition, and update the application if important information changes.

OFFICIAL SOURCES REVIEWED NOVEMBER 20, 2026

DOJ Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence, May 2024, OMB 1123-0016, printed expiration May 31, 2027: https://www.justice.gov/pardon/file/960581/dl
DOJ Apply for Clemency: https://www.justice.gov/pardon/apply-clemency
DOJ Frequently Asked Questions: https://www.justice.gov/pardon/frequently-asked-questions
Prison Professors: https://www.prisonprofessors.org/

APPENDIX C

Prepare on Paper, Build Your Profile, and File Your Petition

Use these pages to take the next step with a notebook and access to mail. You can begin documenting your progress while you decide whether to apply.

Choose the form that fits what you're asking for

If you're asking to reduce a federal sentence

Look for the Petition for Commutation of Sentence. See Lesson 7 (pages 27–30) and Daniel Rowan's sample in Appendix A (pages 42–66).

If you're asking for presidential forgiveness for a federal offense

Start with the Application for Pardon After Completion of Sentence. If you're considering an early pardon request, confirm which instructions apply. See Lesson 6 (pages 23–26) and Elias Ward's sample in Appendix B (pages 67–100).

For a state conviction, start with that state's clemency process. Military cases can have separate filing instructions. Use the directions that apply to your case.

Get a current paper copy

You could ask whether your facility's library or education staff can get the form and instructions, or ask someone who can print them and mail them to you. You can also write to the Office of the Pardon Attorney and ask for a paper copy. Use the form's name and include your mailing address for a reply.

Sample request for a paper form

Dear Office of the Pardon Attorney,
Please send me a paper copy of the current Petition for Commutation of Sentence and its instructions. My mailing address is at the bottom of this letter. Thank you.
[Your name and mailing address]

Use the Office of the Pardon Attorney's address on page 102. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Apply for Clemency" and "Frequently Asked Questions."

Assemble, mail, and follow up

Before you mail

Work through the current form one section at a time. Explain what you're asking for, answer in your own words, and check case details against your records. If you include a journal entry or a letter, identify the question it helps answer.

Commutation

Review the petition's instructions and sign the certification. If a Bureau of Prisons official is submitting it for you, review with that official which materials the form asks them to include. See page 30.

Pardon after completion of sentence

Review the form's checklist, sign the certification and authorization as directed, and mark exactly three signed letters as primary references. The three writers must be unrelated to you by blood or marriage and willing to speak with an investigator. See pages 25–26.

When you mail

Follow the mailing instructions on the current form. Record the date and keep a copy of what you sent so you can refer to it if the office asks a question. The Office of the Pardon Attorney lists this address for federal clemency correspondence.

Clemency mailing address

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Pardon Attorney
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

While your petition is pending

When you receive a confirmation, record the case number. If your mailing address changes or you have a relevant update, you can write to the office and include your clemency case number if available. Use the log example on page 40 to track what you sent and the next action you want to take. The Department of Justice reviews the petition and makes a recommendation. The President decides whether to grant clemency.

Sources include the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, "Contact the Office," "How Clemency Works," and the pardon and commutation forms.

Turn one experience into a record

Daniel Rowan's fictional journal on page 58 shows how an ordinary workday can give someone a concrete example of taking responsibility. Here's how one experience can serve three purposes.

1. Write about what happened

Daniel's April 14, 2026, journal describes entering an inventory count before checking the last shelf. He told his supervisor, recounted the items, and corrected the entry. He planned to check each storage area before signing the next count and review his work at the end of the week.

2. Build your free Prison Professors profile

Daniel could use that dated journal entry to show how he handled the error, then add a follow-up about what happened when he tried the new routine. A biography can explain the kind of work he hopes to do. A book report or release plan can show how he's preparing for those responsibilities.

3. Draw on that record when you prepare your petition

If Daniel chooses to use this example, he can explain the experience in his answer about rehabilitation and submit the relevant journal excerpt with the petition. If a supervisor observed the work, a statement from that person could add a firsthand account. Daniel would use his application log to record what he sent.

A short excerpt Daniel could use

"I entered a count before checking the last shelf. I reported the error, recounted the items, and corrected the entry. In my April 14 journal, I described how I planned to check each storage area before signing the next count."

Choose one experience of your own

Think of a time you learned a skill, corrected a mistake, or followed through on a responsibility. Write the date, the action you took, and what happened. Pick a date to return to the entry. Use that review to describe what you've done since and what you'll try next.

Adapted from Appendix A, "Journal excerpt," page 58. See Lessons 8–10 (pages 31–41) for examples of connecting personal writing and supporting records.

Start your profile from prison

You can begin with one handwritten entry. What were you working toward? What did you do, and what did you learn? Use a question from the workbook or choose one that fits the decision you're facing today.

Choose a way to get help

By mail

Write to the Profiles team at the address below. Include your name and return mailing address. You can enclose a handwritten entry. Give it a date and a type, such as Journal Entry, Biography, Book Report, or Release Plan.

Through your facility's email system, if you have access

Write to Interns@PrisonProfessors.org with "Profile" as the subject. Include your name and ask for help getting started.

Through someone you trust

Ask a family member or friend to visit PrisonProfessors.org/profiles and help open or claim your profile. You can send that person entries to add for you.

A sample letter you can adapt

Dear Prison Professors Profiles Team,
My name is [your name]. I'd like help opening a free profile. I've enclosed a dated journal entry about something I learned. Please write back to the address below and let me know how I can get started.
Thank you,
[Your name and return mailing address]

Where to mail your letter and entry

Prison Professors / Profiles
1205 BMC Drive, Suite #706
Cedar Park, TX 78613

Profile options from Prison Professors, The Playbook, Lesson 29, "Start Your Profile."