

INFLUENCES LEADING TO THE CRIME

- » The video that accompanies this lesson offers more insight and commentary that will help you prepare an effective narrative as part of your comprehensive mitigation strategy.
- » <https://youtu.be/rZ4FKUOQMpA>

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- » Identify patterns, pressures, and missed safeguards that led to offending—without blaming others.
- » Convert knowledge-base material into a focused “Influences” section that shows moral insight and accountability.
- » Use AI in a controlled workflow (prompt → draft → edit) to produce a 400—600 word section with a clean transition from Background and into Lessons Learned.
- » Craft a vivid, truthful scene that illustrates the turning point from rationalization to criminal conduct.

Lesson Summary

This lesson demonstrates how to write the **Influences Leading to the Crime** section by turning your knowledge base into a concise narrative of causes and choices. As the instructor, I try to model the process:

- » return to the AI thread that already contains your transcript and prompt, ask for the next section,
- » paste the draft into your working document, and then
- » edit for voice and accuracy. AI is a tool that can get you most of the way there.

Your job is to personalize, correct, and strengthen.

Purpose of this section. Unlike the Background (which humanizes the person), this section explains *how* specific attitudes and decisions evolved into criminal conduct. The emphasis is on *agency*: entitlement, impatience, denial, and attraction to shortcuts—habits formed long before the first illegal act. The lesson shows a persuasive framing: misconduct didn’t start at arrest; it began when the writer decided rules didn’t apply and surrounded himself with peers and choices that reinforced that belief.

Use concrete detail and a vivid scene. In the video, you’ll see how I revised the AI text to include a specific moment: recruiting two friends to make a Miami—Seattle run, promising easy money, arranging a car loaded with cocaine, and rationalizing culpability because I didn’t want to “touch” the drugs. Sensory detail (where, who, what was said, how it felt) turns abstractions into evidence of mindset. A single, truthful scene helps a judge see the descent into crime and the harm to others.

Name the rationalizations—and reject them. The draft explicitly calls out lies we used to justify or decisions. In my case, there were many: that not handling drugs reduced culpability, that a “victimless crime” exists, that profits made it okay. The section then replaces those myths with clear acceptance: organizing the conduct, corrupting others, and ignoring obvious safeguards made the offense *more* serious, not less.

List missed safeguards. The lesson models a short list of guardrails I failed to install—seeking a mentor, committing to education or a trade, building accountability, practicing patience. Don’t make a list of excuses. Rather, offer an *insight list* that demonstrates mature self-assessment and feeds into the next module, **Lessons Learned**, where each safeguard becomes an action plan.

Workflow reminders. Keep the length to **~400—600 words**. Maintain first-person voice, avoid legal argument, and ensure a smooth transition: end by signaling that the next section will cover what changed in your thinking and what you’re doing now to make things right. Read aloud to remove “AI-ish” phrasing and verify names, dates, and facts.

When finished, you will have a crisp, accountable account of influences and choices that sets up the more forward-looking **Lessons Learned** section.



Key Takeaways

- » Focus on agency, not excuses; show how attitudes became actions.
- » Include one vivid, truthful scene that illustrates your turning point.
- » Call out past rationalizations and explicitly reject them.
- » Name missed safeguards to set up concrete reforms in Lessons Learned.
- » Keep it 400—600 words, first-person, judge-ready, and transition into next section.

Self-Directed Exercise

1. From your knowledge base, list 5—7 influences that led to your offense (attitudes, peers, pressures, decisions).
2. Write a one-paragraph vivid scene (6—8 sentences) that captures your turning point—where you chose the illegal path. Include where, who, what you said/did, and what you felt.
3. Draft your Influences section (400—600 words) using first person. End with a 1—2 sentence transition to Lessons Learned.
4. Read aloud and revise to remove blame-shifting, add specificity, and ensure accountability.

Assessment Questions

1. Multiple choice: The core purpose of the Influences section is to:
 - ◇ a) Re-argue legal innocence
 - ◇ b) Explain external forces beyond your control
 - ◇ c) Show how your attitudes and choices led to the offense, without excuses
 - ◇ d) List every statute involved
2. List two rationalizations the writer identified and how they are rejected in the final draft.



3. True/False: A single vivid scene is optional and usually unnecessary in this section.
4. Name three missed safeguards you can honestly identify in your own path.
5. Write a one-sentence transition that moves cleanly from Influences to Lessons Learned.

Influences that Led to Conviction—Sample

As I reflect on my background, it is clear to me that the cracks in my character—entitlement, immaturity, and lack of discipline—created the conditions that led me into crime. I was not a man without opportunities. In fact, in retrospect, while spending so much time in solitary confinement, I acknowledge that I was a young man who squandered opportunities. Those choices, repeated over time, hardened into a mindset that made my descent into cocaine trafficking possible.

The influences that led me to crime were not sudden or mysterious. They were a continuation of the shortcuts I had already been taking in life. When I graduated from high school without a plan, I carried with me the same attitude that rules did not apply to me. Instead of working toward a meaningful career, I gravitated toward people who validated reckless behavior. Alcohol, parties, and the pursuit of image became my priorities. I measured success not by effort or contribution but by appearances—cars, clothes, and popularity.

It was during this time that I saw the movie *Scarface*. I remember sitting in the theater, struck by the excess and bravado of the main character. His accent reminded me of my father's, and rather than seeing the movie as a warning, I foolishly saw it as inspiration. That distorted view planted the seed of curiosity. If people in Miami could live that way, I wondered, why couldn't I?

That curiosity quickly became action. I began making inquiries, asking acquaintances about the price of cocaine in Miami and the demand for it in Seattle. When I learned that I could purchase a kilogram of cocaine in Miami for \$20,000, and sell that same kilogram in Seattle for more than double, I convinced myself that I had discovered an “opportunity.” Instead



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of asking whether it was legal, moral, or sustainable, I asked only how I could profit and how I could lessen the likelihood of getting caught.

That shows how warped my thinking was at the time.

The scene that best captures my descent into this lifestyle happened on a night when I convinced two friends—people I had known from high school—to fly to Miami. I promised them a free trip, hotel accommodations, and a quick payday if they would simply drive a car back to Seattle. I had arranged for others to load the car with cocaine. I still remember sitting in a Seattle bar before they left, assuring them it would be “easy money.” I was only twenty years old, arrogant, and reckless enough to believe my own pitch. What I did that night was not only criminal but also deeply irresponsible. I corrupted people I cared about, leading them into crime alongside me. That betrayal of trust is one of the many reasons I now look back with regret and shame.

My thinking at the time was guided by selfishness and denial. I convinced myself that because I did not ever handle the cocaine, I wasn’t really breaking the law. I rationalized that everyone involved was an adult making a choice. I told myself that drug trafficking was a victimless crime. All of these thoughts were lies I told myself to avoid facing the truth: that I was orchestrating illegal conduct, profiting from it, and putting others at risk.

Over time, this pattern of denial only deepened. As the profits grew, I became more confident, more reckless, and more blind to the consequences. I began to see myself as a leader, but instead of leading with integrity, I led people into harm. I ignored every safeguard that should have stopped me—family values, community standards, and my own moral conscience.

Looking back, I can identify clear safeguards that I should have implemented, but failed to:

- » Seeking mentorship: I should have found a mentor—someone with wisdom and integrity—to guide me toward responsible choices.
- » Commitment to education: I should have pursued higher education or training, giving me purpose and direction instead of drifting.
- » Building accountability: I should have surrounded myself with people who held me to higher standards rather than peers who encouraged recklessness.



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- » Learning patience: I should have accepted that building a meaningful life takes time and effort, rather than chasing shortcuts.

My failure to put these safeguards in place left me vulnerable to temptation and arrogance. Instead of striving for a life of dignity, I chose crime. And instead of leading people toward opportunity, I dragged them into risk.

These were not mistakes of ignorance. They were the results of selfishness, immaturity, and poor character. I alone bear the responsibility for choosing that path.



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