

JAIL GUIDE

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Introduction

First, let me say thank you for buying this book. You have either bought it for yourself, for a friend, or for someone you love. Either way, you made a smart move.

Let's be honest with each other. Nobody plans to go to jail or prison. It just happens. One day you are living your life, and the next day you are standing in front of a judge wondering how things got so far off the rails. It happens to good people every single day.

Going to jail or prison is like your first day at a brand new school. You don't know anyone. You don't know where to go. You don't know who to sit with, what the rules are, or who runs what. The difference is, in this school, the wrong move can get you hurt.

That is why I wrote this book. Not to scare you. To prepare you.

I write this assuming you have already hired a lawyer, fought your case, and are either about to be sentenced or already know you are going in. You are nervous and unsure about what is coming. That is perfectly normal. What you are about to go through is one of the hardest things a person can face.

But here is the truth: most people survive it. And the ones who do the best are the ones who were prepared.

My Story

You are probably wondering what makes me qualified to write this. Fair question.

I was a computer programmer. A good one. Good enough that people paid me very well to gather information electronically. What I did not know was that one of my jobs was a setup. I coded right through it. Next thing I knew, I was unable to post bail and sitting in a facility wondering what the hell just happened.

While I sat there, I started watching. I noticed two types of people coming through the doors. The new ones were either crying, staring at the floor, or completely frozen. The old-timers walked in like they owned the place. They got their paperwork, made their calls, and helped themselves to food from the guys who were too scared to eat.

The old-timers were not tougher. They just knew what to expect. They had been through it before. And that made all the difference.

Think about your favorite fast food restaurant. You walk in relaxed and confident because you know exactly how it works. You know where the line is, how to read the menu, where the napkins are. Now imagine walking into that same place blindfolded and panicked. Completely different experience, right?

This book is your map. By the time you finish it, you will know where the napkins are.

The Honest Truth About the System

The United States locks up more people than any other country on earth. We house about 25% of the world's prisoners, even though we are only about 4% of the world's population. We spend more money on locking people up than we do on educating them. That should tell you something.

Prisons are run by states, the federal government, and private corporations. All of them have one thing in common: a bottom line. They are not primarily in the business of turning your life around. They are in the business of housing bodies. Think of it like a storage facility. They get paid to keep you there.

Private, corporate-run prisons are a growing part of the system. In my opinion, they are the worst option for an inmate. When a company profits from keeping you locked up, there is very little incentive to help you get out or stay out. The longer you are there, the more money they make. Keep that in mind.

It costs taxpayers roughly \$35,000 to \$60,000 per year to house one inmate in the United States. Some states spend even more. Do the math. That is a lot of money flowing through a system that is not exactly focused on your well-being.

None of this is meant to make you angry. It is meant to help you understand the world you are entering so you can navigate it with your eyes open.

Your Rights as a Prisoner

Even though you are locked up, you are still a citizen of the United States. You still have rights. These cannot be taken from you. Know them.

- The right to be safe and secure while imprisoned
- The right to freedom of religion
- The right to proper clothing and nutrition
- The right to an education
- The right to legal materials and access to the courts
- The right to medical care
- The right to sue the prison system if any of these rights are violated

We will go deeper into your legal rights later in this book. For now, just know that the system cannot do whatever it wants to you. There are rules. Learn them.

How to Use This Book

This book is packed with tips and lessons. Pay close attention to the MAJOR TIP boxes. Those are the ones that can seriously affect your safety and your time. Every chapter also ends with a quick list of tips to review.

Read this whole book before you go in if you can. If you are already inside, read as much as you can as fast as you can. Every chapter has something useful for you.

Good luck. Let's begin.

- *Pete*

Chapter One

How It All Began

If you are reading this book, you probably did not read my first one - 'How Not to Go to Prison.' That is okay. It was not exactly a bestseller. But honestly, if you are holding this book right now, you are probably too far down the road for that version anyway.

This book is for people who are facing time. Maybe you are waiting on a sentence. Maybe you already have a date. Maybe a family member is about to go in and you want to understand what they are walking into. This book is for all of you.

The chapters ahead will help you stay safe, keep your head on straight, and get out in one piece. I am going to be straight with you the whole way through. Some of what I say will make you uncomfortable. That is fine. Uncomfortable now is better than blindsided later.

I learned a lot of what is in this book from an old con who took me under his wing when I first went in. I was at the right place at the right time to help him out, and he paid me back with knowledge that probably kept me out of even bigger trouble. There are a lot of ways to make a bad situation worse in prison. This book will help you avoid most of them.

What Prison Is Really About

Prison was designed to keep people who broke the law away from the rest of society. That is the simple version. The real version is a little more complicated.

Most prisons are run to cut costs and hit a budget number. Rehabilitation is not the top priority. Housing bodies is. The people running your facility are more focused on keeping things calm and keeping costs low than they are on helping you become a better person.

That does not mean your time has to be wasted. It means you have to take responsibility for your own growth. Nobody is going to hand it to you. We will talk more about this in later chapters.

For now, understand the environment you are entering. It can be dangerous. It can be boring. It can be demoralizing. But it is survivable. Millions of people have done it. You will too.

The Guard Is Not Your Enemy

MAJOR TIP!

One of the most important lessons in this entire book: Respect the guards. They did not put you there. They are just doing a job. Treat them with basic respect and your life inside will be much easier. Do NOT try to buddy up to them either. Just be professional, be polite, and mind your business.

Sounds simple, right? You would be surprised how many people blow it on this one.

The guard controls your daily life more than anyone else in that building. They control when you eat, when you sleep, when you get yard time, and when you get visits. A guard who respects you can make your time manageable. A guard who does not can make every single day miserable.

You are not there to make friends with them. You are not there to impress them. You are there to do your time and get out. Keep it simple. Speak when spoken to. Say please and thank you. Stay out of drama. Be someone they do not have to worry about.

On the flip side - do not try to get cozy with guards either. Other inmates watch everything. If they think you are too friendly with staff, that creates problems of a different kind. Find the middle ground and stay there.

Tips Before You Go In

If you have any time before you report, use it wisely. These tips can make a huge difference in how your time goes - and how your life looks when you get out.

TIP #1

Make sure you understand everything about your case and your sentence. If something is unclear, ask your lawyer to explain it again. This is your life. You have every right to understand exactly what is happening to it. Your lawyer will move on to the next client the moment you walk out the door - make sure you get your questions answered first.

TIP #2

Be civil and respectful to everyone in the process - court clerks, intake officers, processing staff. These people did not do anything to you. Treating them badly will not help you and can actually hurt you. Bad paperwork, slow processing, and lost forms happen more often to people who act like jerks. Keep the waters calm.

TIP #3

Make peace with your family and friends before you go in. You are going to need their support. Whether it is money in your account, letters, visits, or just knowing someone on the outside cares - those connections matter more than you think. Patch things up before you go.

TIP #4

Get all your important paperwork in order. Make copies and have them notarized. Birth certificate, social security card, any legal documents related to your case. If originals get lost while you are away, you will have certified copies. This saves enormous headaches when you get out.

TIP #5

Find a notary before you go in. Start with your bank - most banks have a notary on staff and it is usually free for account holders. Your lawyer will also have one, though they may charge. Laws vary by state, so confirm with your bank first.

TIP #6

Renew your driver's license if it is close to expiring. Most states now offer licenses valid for 8 to 10 years. Renewing it before you go in means one less headache when you get out. Walking out of the gate with a valid ID and the ability to drive is a huge advantage on Day One of freedom.

TIP #7

Freeze your credit with all three bureaus. This is now FREE in all 50 states - that changed in 2018. A credit freeze stops anyone from opening new accounts in your name while you are away. Contact all three bureaus: Equifax at equifax.com, TransUnion at transunion.com, and Experian at experian.com. Each will give you a PIN to unfreeze when you are ready. Do this before you go in.

TIP #8

Consider selling your car, electronics, and appliances you will not need. Put that money in a savings account. By the time you get out, your car will need major work and your electronics will be outdated anyway. The cash will mean a lot more to you on the outside. Before selling any computer or phone, wipe the hard drive completely so your personal data does not walk out the door with it.

MAJOR TIP!

Get in shape before you go in. You do not need to be a bodybuilder. But you need to not be weak. Start walking every day. Do pushups, sit-ups, anything to build your baseline fitness. A strong body helps your mind stay strong too. Consult your doctor before starting any new exercise program.

TIP #9

Donate your clothes or give them away. Your body will change inside - most people lose weight and gain muscle if they stay active. Clothes you own now probably will not fit when you get out. Donating also gives you a tax deduction if you itemize.

TIP #10

Assign a Power of Attorney before you go in. This is a trusted person - a spouse, parent, sibling, or close friend - who can sign documents, manage accounts, pay bills, and handle legal matters on your behalf while you are away. Choose this person very carefully. It should be someone with good judgment who will not take advantage of the access they have.

**TIP
#11**

You still have to file taxes while you are in. Do not give the government another reason to come after you. Your Power of Attorney can handle this. The form they will need is IRS Form 2848 - Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative. Download it free at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).

Chapter Two

How to Turn Yourself In and Face the Music

This chapter is for anyone who has been charged, indicted, or has a warrant out for their arrest. It is also for anyone who has not been charged yet but suspects it is coming. If that is you, pay close attention. The decisions you make right now will affect everything that happens next.

The tips in this chapter apply whether you are about to turn yourself in or are already sitting in a holding cell. Read every one of them.

MAJOR TIP!

SHUT UP. Do not talk about your case with anyone except your paid attorney. Not your best friend. Not your mother. Not your cellmate. Not the detective who says he wants to help you. Nobody. This is the single most important tip in this entire chapter.

Tips for Turning Yourself In

TIP #1

If there is no warrant for your arrest yet, do not ask the police to check for you. Go online to your local court's website instead. Most courts list active warrants publicly. If you cannot find anything online, have your attorney check for you. The less contact you have with law enforcement before you need to, the better.

TIP #2

Talk to **NO ONE** about your case except your lawyer. Not your girlfriend. Not your parents. Not your coworkers. People you trust today can become witnesses against you tomorrow. Some will do it on purpose. Some will do it without meaning to. Either way, you lose. Keep your mouth shut and let your attorney do the talking.

TIP #3

Hire a lawyer you trust before you do anything else. You do not have to go with the first one you meet. Shop around. Interview a few. Find someone who makes you feel like they are in your corner. And whatever you do, do NOT tell your lawyer whether you actually committed the crime. That information goes with you to the grave.

TIP #4

Find a reputable bail bondsman before you need one. Do not wait until you are sitting in a holding cell. Research bonding companies in your area now. When you talk to a bondsman, do not discuss the details of your case. It is none of their business, and they can be called as witnesses. All they need to know is the charge and the bond amount.

TIP #5

If there is a warrant out for your arrest, turn yourself in. Do not make them come looking for you. Showing up on your own tells the judge you are not a flight risk. That alone can lower your bond amount or even get it waived. Running only makes everything worse and adds charges on top of whatever you are already facing.

MAJOR TIP!

THIS IS CRITICAL: Once you are in custody, you only have to give them your name, date of birth, and address. That is it. Do NOT answer any other questions. If an officer starts asking you questions about the crime, ask clearly: 'Am I under arrest?' If yes, ask for the charges and ask to be Mirandized. Then say only this: 'I wish to remain silent and speak with my attorney.' After that, not one more word.

How the System Works for a Misdemeanor

Understanding how the legal process works can take a lot of the fear out of it. Here is a plain-language breakdown of what happens in a misdemeanor case from start to finish.

Arraignment

This is your first appearance in court. You will be asked to enter a plea: guilty, not guilty, or no contest. Always plead not guilty at arraignment, even if you plan to take a deal later. Pleading not guilty keeps your options open.

Pre-Trial Conference

This is a meeting between your lawyer and the prosecutor. They will discuss the strength of the case, possible plea deals, and other factors like your background and criminal history. This is where a lot of deals get made.

Sentencing

If you plead guilty or are found guilty, the judge decides your punishment at a sentencing hearing. Victims may speak. You may speak. Your attorney will prep you on what to say. Keep your cool. Be calm, respectful, and remorseful. The judge is human. How you carry yourself matters.

Plea Bargaining and How It Works

Here is something most people do not know: about 95% of all criminal cases in the United States end in a plea deal. Not a trial. A deal.

A plea deal gives you a known outcome. You agree to plead guilty to a charge, usually a lesser one, in exchange for a set sentence. If you go to trial and lose, the judge may hit you much harder because of the time and money the system spent on your case.

That does not mean you should always take the first deal offered. Sometimes the offer is bad and trial is the right move. Your attorney will know the difference. Listen to them.

Chapter Two Summary

- Shut your mouth. Talk only to your attorney.
- Turn yourself in rather than making them come for you.
- Understand the process so nothing surprises you.
- Plead not guilty at arraignment, no matter what.
- Know your bail options before you need them.
- Phone calls from jail are recorded. Every single one.
- The media is not your friend. Never speak to them.

Chapter Three

Sentencing and Reporting

Sentencing day is one of the worst days of your life. There is no way around that. The only day that comes close is the day you were arrested. On this day you sit in a courtroom and wait for a stranger in a robe to decide how many years of your life you are going to lose.

Here is something important to understand. The judge is a human being. They have good days and bad days just like everyone else. They have opinions, moods, and personal feelings about certain kinds of crimes. The law gives them guidelines, but within those guidelines there is often a range. Where you land in that range can depend a lot on how you present yourself.

Even if you took a plea deal, the judge can still sentence you more harshly if they feel you are not truly sorry for what happened. Talk to your attorney about how to present yourself correctly on this day.

The Pre-Sentence Investigation Report (PSI)

Before you are sentenced, a probation officer will be assigned to compile a report about you. This is called the Pre-Sentence Investigation Report, or PSI. It is one of the most important documents in your entire case and most people do not take it seriously enough.

This report tells the judge who you are as a person. It covers your background, your history, your family, and the circumstances of your crime. The judge reads this report carefully before deciding your sentence. A good PSI can mean the difference between the low end and the high end of your sentencing range.

Do NOT lie on this report. Do not lie to the probation officer conducting the interview. If they catch you in a lie, and they often do, your sentence can get worse. Be honest, be humble, and present yourself as someone who takes responsibility and is ready to do better.

The RDAP Program - How to Cut Years Off Your Sentence

KNOW THIS

This section could be worth 12 months off your sentence. Read it carefully and talk to your attorney about it.

If you are heading to a federal facility and have any history with drugs or alcohol, this is one of the most important things in this entire book.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons offers a program called RDAP - the Residential Drug Abuse Program. If you qualify and successfully complete the program, you can receive up to 12 months off your sentence.

- You must be a non-violent offender to qualify for the sentence reduction.
- You must have a documented history of drug or alcohol abuse or dependence.
- The program runs for about 500 hours over roughly 9 months.
- You must pass all drug tests and complete all required classes and treatment.
- Upon successful completion, you can receive up to 12 months off your sentence.

This is not a trick. It is federal law and it works. But you have to qualify, you have to apply, and you have to complete the program without screwing up. Talk to your attorney about RDAP before you are sentenced.

Tips for Surviving Your First Few Days

The first few days are the hardest. Everything is new, everything is loud, and everyone is watching you. Here is how to get through them.

TIP #1

Be civil and respectful to guards and staff from the very first moment. Guards want a boring, uneventful shift. Be the most boring inmate in the building. That is a compliment in here.

TIP #2

Travel light. Bring almost nothing in with you except your clothes and your money order. No cash. No jewelry. No valuables of any kind. People watch what you put into your personal property bag. If they see cash or anything worth taking, you become a target immediately.

TIP #3

Keep your commissary situation to yourself. Do not tell anyone how much money you have or do not have. Play broke. Keep only what you need in your account.

MAJOR TIP!

If any inmate offers you something for free when you first arrive - cigarettes, food, a candy bar, anything - turn it down. There is no such thing as a free gift in prison. Once you accept it, you owe. And what they ask for in return is never worth what they gave you.

Chapter Three Summary

- Present yourself with respect and humility at sentencing.
- Take your PSI interview seriously - it directly affects your sentence.
- Ask your attorney about the RDAP program if you have any substance history.
- Report to your facility with almost nothing - travel light.
- Stay calm during in-processing. Keep your head down and get through it.
- Do not accept gifts from anyone in your first days inside.
- Keep your financial situation completely private.
- Contact your family at every opportunity to reassure them and yourself.

The first week is the hardest. After that, you will start to understand the rhythm of the place and things will feel slightly less impossible. Hang in there.

This excerpt covers just 3 of the 14 chapters in Jail Guide.

The full book includes chapters on:

*Surviving daily life inside • Mental health • Your legal rights • Getting out
• Life after release • And much more*

Want the full book? All 14 chapters of proven, real-world advice are waiting for you at:

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