

Writing a Great Letter of Recommendation Is No Small Feat

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Being asked to write a letter of recommendation is a privilege. When you have a student, colleague, or employee with great potential, you want to do your best to convey their talents and skills. However, it can be challenging to know what to include in a letter of recommendation to make it stand out from the rest. If you manage many students or interns, application season can become stressful as you receive multiple requests for recommendations. In this article, we discuss some tips for making your recommendations shine so you can provide your recommendees with the accolades they deserve and save yourself some stress.

Are You An Accomplished Person to Provide a Recommendation?

Whether you have been asked to write a letter of recommendation or are preparing to ask for one, there are several factors to consider. First, just because someone asks you to write a letter of recommendation does not mean you need to say yes. Letters of recommendation should come from superiors, senior colleagues, teachers, or professors. But [you should consider your relationship](#) with the person asking for a letter. Do you have an accurate idea of their capabilities? If someone whom you have known only for a brief time asks you for a letter, it is likely in your and their best interests to decline. Likewise, If someone asks you for a recommendation which has not impressed you in some way with their performance or potential, [you should not take on the job](#).

Ideally, you will agree to write letters only for those candidates whom you know well. The whose work ethic and quality you can wholeheartedly endorse. Keep in mind that while you are doing someone a favor by writing such a letter, doing so can be in your interest as well. You can [deepen your professional relationship](#), and build your own network as those you have worked with and mentored enter the professional or academic world.

What Information Do You Need to Write A Good Letter?

If someone you know well who you are happy to endorse asks for your help, [you will need some information](#) before you can get started. Many undergraduates or inexperienced job seekers are unaware of what information they should provide to you. A brief list of what you should ask for includes:

- Specific information about the job or program they are applying for
- The name of the position
- The name of the person to address the letter to
- The deadline to submit the letter (make sure to clarify if this dead is for submission, postmarked, or received by)
- How the letter should be submitted (hard copy, email, online submission, etc.)
- Specific information they would like you to include to support their application (skills, experiences, etc.)

It is often simplest to ask a candidate to send you a copy of the job advertisement or program information which they are applying for. Also, their application materials, such as their cover letter or application essay. This way, you can understand what the job or program entails. See what the candidate themselves has emphasized with regard to their skills and talents. This information can help you tailor your own letter to support what they have said to the hiring or selection committee.

What Should My Recommendation Letter Look Like?

There is no rigid format for a letter of recommendation, although [some institutions have generalized the process](#) to make it easier. If you work with many students or junior employees, it can be quite helpful to [develop your own template](#) to use for recommendations. This way, you can save time and effort while still tailoring the letter to each individual.

Every letter of recommendation should [contain three key elements](#). The first is information about you, such as your title and place of work, in what capacity you know the person, and how long you have known them. The second is an [evaluation of the person's skills and accomplishments](#). Some basic skills to highlight include reliability, leadership, teamwork, motivation, and character. The best letters of recommendation [include specific examples](#) or metrics that illustrate why a candidate is a good fit for the position they are applying for. Finally, you should explain why you think the candidate will be a good fit for the position or program.

Below is a sample recommendation letter template.

Dear (Hiring Manager):

My name is (name), and I am writing to recommend (candidate) who is applying for the position/program of (job title). (Candidate) was employed as (position) under my supervision for (time) at (organization). In my role and capacity as the (your job title), I worked with numerous (employees/students/interns), which allows me to write with intense confidence that (candidate) possesses (attribute 1), (attribute 2), and (attribute 3) that will allow him to thrive in the role of (job title).

During (candidate's) time at (organization), (candidate) worked closely with me on (project 1) (task 1) and (project 2). I was most impressed with his (ability), (skill), and (skill). (Insert example of ability). (Insert example of skill). (Insert example of second skill). Although he was only with us for a short time, his diligence, high quality of work, and warm presence made him a welcome addition to (organization).

With his (skill) and (attribute), I firmly believe that (candidate) will be very successful in (role) and that his capacity to do (skill) will make him an excellent contributor to your team. If you have any further questions regarding the work he did with me at (organization), please feel free to contact me at (email address).

Sincerely,

(Your name)

A great recommendation letter can provide recruiters or hiring managers with valuable insight into a candidate. Always keep in mind when writing a letter of recommendation about the essential skills and qualities the role or program requires. Emphasize how the candidate meets these requirements. With some practice, you will become a skilled

recommendation writer in no time.

Are you a hiring manager, academic coordinator, or recruiter who has received excellent (or terrible!) letters of recommendation? What are your tips for writing a great letter of recommendation? Let us know your thoughts in the comments below.

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