

Tips For Requesting a Strong Letter of Recommendation

Recommendation Letter Do's & Don'ts

Do:

- Use letterhead stationery (if possible)
- Sign your letter (if possible)
- Write a letter that is at least one full page in length
- Use specific examples to demonstrate skills and experiences
- Ask for more information from the applicant if you need it. You can ask for a resume or to see their personal statement if it would be helpful in writing your letter
- Be honest about both the applicant's strengths and areas for improvement
- Be specific about what makes this applicant special or unique
- Proofread your letter

Do Not:

- Agree to write a letter if you do not fully believe an applicant will be successful in the program
- Agree to write a letter for an applicant you have known very briefly (less than a few months)
- Agree to write a letter if you will not be able to submit it by the application deadline
- Write a short letter of ½ a page or less
- Be vague

Suggested Outlines

Suggested Outline for Letter of Recommendation from an Instructor:

1. Greeting line.
2. Your role relative to the applicant (e.g., supervisor), how long you have known them, overall assessment, and recommendation regarding applicant being accepted to the program.
3. Discussion of applicant's attendance, participation, assignment and/or exam work for each course wherein you served as their instructor.
4. Discussion of applicant's characteristics (e.g., responsible, self-motivated) that will serve them well in the program.
5. If applicable, discussion of mentoring or meeting the applicant outside of the classroom.
6. Closing paragraph. Direct recommendation of the applicant for the specific program.
7. Signature Line.

Suggested Outline for Letter of Recommendation from an Employer:

1. Greeting line.
2. Your role relative to the applicant (e.g., supervisor), how long you have known them, overall assessment of applicant, and recommendation regarding applicant being accepted to the program.

3. First positive skill or trait, and a specific example or anecdote of the applicant's demonstration of the skill.
4. Second positive skill or strait, and a specific example of anecdote of the applicant's demonstration of the skill.
5. Discussion of applicant's characteristics (e.g., responsible, self-motivated) that will serve them well in the program.
6. Closing paragraph. Direct recommendation of the applicant for the specific program.
7. Signature Line.