

Letters of Recommendation: Who to ask, what to give them.

(For Student Use Only)

Why this is important: Many times letters of recommendation are required when applying for scholarships or college. Don't underestimate the importance of these letters. While your transcript, standardized test scores, and essays provide vital information about you, an excellent letter of recommendation can make up for weaknesses in any of these areas and provide information that isn't found elsewhere in the application. This letter usually includes your character traits, accomplishments, leadership qualities, and experiences that make you unique.

Who to ask: First rule is you CANNOT use a relative. It should be someone who knows you well and can say good things about you. Possible people ask include: teachers, club sponsors, coaches, administrators, counselors, employers, & community leaders. These people should...

- know you well & long enough to write with authority
- know your work & can say positive things about you
- have a high opinion of you & be able to favorably compare you with your peers
- know your educational and career goals
- know what college you are applying to
- be able to write a good letter

How to ask: When you approach potential person, ask if they know you well enough to write a meaningful letter. Pay attention to their demeanor. If you sense reluctance, thank them and ask someone else. Remember the following:

- Ask early (giving them 2-3 weeks is best, but at the very least give them 48 hours before YOU need it)
- If adding to portfolio to use in the future, ask a teacher before the course ends
- Ask in person if possible
- Explain what you are applying for

Info to provide: Don't assume your letter writer knows or remembers everything about you. Provide all information that you think may be helpful or that you would like to have appear in the letter of recommendation by completing the "**Letter of Recommendation Request.**" Additional Items you may need to provide the letter writer:

- A copy of your unofficial transcript
- Copy of Recommendation Form (if college/scholarship requires their own form be used)
- If the letter writer is to submit recommendation themselves, provide mailing instructions and a pre-addressed stamped envelope
- The "*Tips for Writing Recommendation Letters*" *handout*

Deadline Approaches: Check back to see if they have completed/submitted your recommendation.

Afterwards: Send them a short thank you note and let them know the outcome of your application. You never know when you might need to use them again.

- The note should be **handwritten** on a blank Thank You note card.
- The note should be addressed to the person writing the recommendation letter for you.
- The note should either be given along with the Letter of Recommendation Request form, or mailed within one week of receiving the completed letter from them.

Dear _____:

Thank you very much for taking the time to write a recommendation letter for me. It will play an important role in the application process in my pursuit of financial aid for college in the form of scholarships.

I deeply appreciate your investment in my future as my _____ (teacher, counselor, coach, advisor, pastor, supervisor....). I hope that one day I will be able to give something back to those who have assisted me in achieving my dreams.

Sincerely,

(Your Full Name so they can read it)

References

Sometimes scholarship committees don't request Letters of Recommendations **from you**, rather they ask for contact information of adults (not relatives) who can vouch for your work experience, work habits, character and skills. Usually when they do this, they'll reach out to your references to find out more about you.

Name _____
Occupation title _____
School/Business name _____
School/Business address _____
City, State ZIP Code _____
School/Business email _____
School/Business phone # (_____)_____ - _____

Name _____
Occupation title _____
School/Business name _____
School/Business address _____
City, State ZIP Code _____
School/Business email _____
School/Business phone # (_____)_____ - _____

Name _____
Occupation title _____
School/Business name _____
School/Business address _____
City, State ZIP Code _____
School/Business email _____
School/Business phone # (_____)_____ - _____

Name _____
Occupation title _____
School/Business name _____
School/Business address _____
City, State ZIP Code _____
School/Business email _____
School/Business phone # (_____)_____ - _____

Letter of Recommendation Request

To: _____ From: _____ Date: _____

If you would please write a letter of recommendation for me on **official letterhead**, I would appreciate it very much. Could you also please make _____ additional **original** copies addressed, "To Whom It May Concern:" so that I may use them for additional scholarships?

This letter of recommendation is for: ____ Scholarship ____ College ____ Job ____ Other

Name of scholarship/ college/business to which I'm applying _____

The deadline for this letter of recommendation is _____

GPA 4.0 _____ Class Rank ____/____ SAT Score (EBRW & Math) _____ Cumulative ACT Score _____

My intended college major is _____ My career goal is _____

Clubs/organizations (school, community, church) I've been a member of or Awards I've received during high school			
Club/Organization or Award Name	Position Held (member/officer)	Membership Dates	Activities, Events & Awards

Jobs I've had during high school			
Business Name	Position	Employment Dates	Job Duties & Awards

Volunteer work I've done during high school		
Place of Service	Dates of Service	Description of Service & Awards

TIPS FOR WRITING RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

(For letter writer)

Address the *Letter of Recommendation* "To Whom It May Concern." It is usually appropriate and sufficient unless the student specifies that the letter of recommendation is to be addressed to a specific scholarship name or organization. Emphasize the character qualities of the student in the recommendation letter, why you believe they will be successful in the future, and why they deserve a scholarship. Save the letter of recommendation on a computer for future reference or in case the student needs another recommendation letter. Print five copies on official letterhead of your school, business, or organization.

Some descriptors or phrases that could be used if appropriate are:

-  1. I have not known a more dedicated and exceptional young (man/woman) that has beat all the odds. (Student's name) is a first generation college student. (Student's name) is the first in (his/her) family to graduate from high school and go to college.
-  2. It is with pleasure I write this letter of recommendation letter for (student's name). I have had the delight of having taught (student's name) in (name of subject or courses) and have found (him/her) to be one of the most talented students I have ever come in contact with during my teaching career.
-  3. (Student's name) struggles have taught (him/her) responsibility, determination, and have strengthened (his/her) character. (Some specific character qualities could be mentioned if applicable to the student such as: diligence, perseverance, punctuality, leadership, compassion, initiative, integrity, responsibility, determination, enthusiasm, dependability, honesty, gratefulness, nurture, and creativity.)
-  4. (Student's name) demonstrates the character qualities of _____. (Student's name) displays the character qualities of friendliness, compassion, respect, and politeness. (Also, if possible, give a specific incident where this character quality was demonstrated.)
-  5. (Student's name) has a well-rounded personality. (Student's name) exhibits character qualities that would make (him/her) a most desirable candidate for a scholarship. (Name one or more character qualities). In my opinion, (Student's name) has the character qualities and characteristics to be very successful in life. (Name one or more qualities)
-  6. (Student's name) is extremely self-motivated (or is a self-starter) to learn and I think this is quite evident from his transcript and the high academic level of courses (he/she) has pursued through (his/her) high school career. (Student's name) goes beyond the required class time to understand and grasp academic material. (He/she) has excellent work habits and I can honestly say (he/she) is capable of achieving any goal (he/she) may set for (him/herself).
-  7. (Student's name) is very articulate and is well liked by all of (his/her) peers. I have seen (him/her) work extremely well with others and also go out of (his/her) way to help a fellow classmate understand a particular concept.
-  8. Of special interest is (his/her) community service with (name the community service activities). (Describe what the student has learned through the community service activities. Discuss any of the student's honors, awards, leadership positions or school activities.) Forced to face great difficulties, all ((Student's name) energies have been directed to help others. (Student's name) makes a difference in the lives of (list who the student is impacting....at-risk or academically struggling or handicapped, elementary students, elderly....as a mentor or tutor).
-  Please give (him/her) the utmost consideration for a scholarship. Without a scholarship (Student's name) will have difficulty reaching (his/her) dream of becoming (list student's career goal). I highly recommend (Student's name) for your scholarship and I feel that (he/she) will use the scholarship to not only improve (his/her) knowledge base, but also help to make the world around (him/her) a better place. (Student's name) will be a positive addition to any institution and is an excellent choice to receive this scholarship.

Modified from Path to Scholarships