

Academic Recommendation Letters



Components of a Recommendation Letter

Every recommendation letter should include three key components:

- A paragraph or sentence that explains how you know this person and the duration of your relationship with them.
- An evaluation of the person and their skills/accomplishments. If possible offer specific examples that illustrate the person's strengths and qualifications. These examples should be brief but detailed.
- A summary that explains why you would recommend this person and to what degree you would recommend them.



ACADEMIC LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Requested by students trying to gain acceptance in a variety of scenarios.



EMPLOYMENT LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Similar to previous, but specifically used to help the applicant acquiring a certain job.



CHARACTER REFERENCES

Not written by academic or employment superiors, and less formal compared to the other two.

Writing a recommendation letter

Source:

<https://bit.ly/3iSPbwU>, <https://bit.ly/2RM8Rqx> & <https://bit.ly/302bysp>

John I. Academician

123 Main Street, Anytown, CA 12345 · 555-555-5555 · jiacademician@ku.edu

September 1, 2018

English Department Admissions Committee
University of Tennessee
123 University Rd.
University City, 54321

Dear Admissions Committee Members:

It is with much pleasure and enthusiasm that I am writing to you to support the candidacy of Elizabeth Hagen for admission to the English Department's Graduate Program at the University of Tennessee.

1 Ask the student for information on the school or program so you can focus your letter.

2 Explain how you know the person.

I first met Elizabeth when she enrolled in my sophomore-level course in Victorian Literature at the University of Kansas, a class in which she demonstrated writing and literary analysis talents far beyond the capability of most of her peers. Her enthusiasm for Dickens and post-modern critical analysis led her to complete other classes in advanced Victorian Studies with me, and it was my privilege to serve as her advisor for her senior honors project, "Gender Ambiguity in Dickens' Orphans."

3 Provide examples of the student's accomplishments.

Elizabeth's penetrating mind allows her not only to grasp the basics of our curriculum, but also to formulate highly original and persuasive interpretative arguments. She demonstrates superb leadership and organizational skills in leading group projects, and is one of our most highly ranked undergraduate teaching assistants in our entry-level English 101 courses. She is also a humorous and engaging speaker, and has presented two extremely well-received papers at the annual Victorian Studies conference at the University of Florida.

I am thus convinced that Elizabeth will prove herself to be a valuable contributor to your English Department, both as a graduate student and as a Teaching and / or Research Assistant. She is more than deserving of any financial assistance you can offer as she completes her Master's and Doctoral degrees.

Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide to support you in your decision-making process. I am emailing copies of this letter to Dr. Greg Trahern, English Chair, and to Dr. Jennifer McCracken, senior professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Tennessee.

Sincerely,

John I. Academician

4 Emphasize your strong endorsement of the student.

5 Offer to provide additional information to help support the applicant's candidacy.

What to Include in Your Letter

A personal reference letter should provide information on who you are, your connection with the person you are recommending, why they are qualified, and the specific skills they have that you are endorsing. It should also include specific examples of times they demonstrated these skills. Review this template for ideas and suggestions on what to write and how to provide a compelling reference:

Salutation

When writing a character reference letter, include a salutation (Dear Dr. Jones, Dear Ms. Matthews, etc.). If you are writing a general letter, say "To Whom it May Concern" or don't include a salutation and start with the first paragraph of the letter.

Paragraph 1

The first paragraph of the character reference letter explains how you know the person you are recommending and why you are qualified to write a recommendation letter to recommend employment, college, or graduate school. With a personal letter, you are writing a recommendation letter because you know the person and their character, rather than because you have direct experience with their work or education.

Paragraph 2

The second paragraph of a reference letter contains specific information on the person you are writing about, including why they are qualified, what they can contribute, and why you are providing a reference letter. Use specific examples of times the employer demonstrated these skills or qualities. If necessary, use more than one paragraph to provide details.

Summary

This section of the reference letter contains a brief summary of why you are recommending the person. State that you "highly recommend" the person or you "recommend without reservation" or something similar.

Conclusion

The concluding paragraph of a reference letter contains an offer to provide more information. Include a phone number and/or email address within the paragraph and include the phone number and email address in the return address section of your letter, or in your email signature.

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