

TIPS ON HOW TO OBTAIN EXCELLENT PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

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A scholarship recommendation letter provides information regarding a candidate's character, qualities and achievements.

1. Read the scholarship recommendation requirements carefully. Typically, the judges look for examples of compassion, leadership skills, achievements, strong commitment to goals, history of overcoming obstacles, passion and dedication to the field of interest, etc., all which fulfill the basic criteria of a chosen scholarship.
2. Select six persons who know you well and can provide recommendation letters with strong endorsements for your qualities and future success. Ask if they would like to adapt their letters for other scholarships in the future.
3. Choose the ideal person who can illuminate your impressive qualities and tell your story for a particular scholarship. For example, would the letter be best coming from an instructor? Employer? Long-time friend? Coach? If judges are looking for specific work achievements, a current employer or manager would likely be the best choice.
4. Ensure that the author understands the requirements of the recommendation letter for the specific scholarship, as well as the guidelines and expectations of the scholarship.
5. It is wise to meet with the author prior to starting the letter. This provides you the opportunity to update recent achievements and discuss the specific scholarship details and what points should be noted in the letter.
6. In most cases, the letter should cover information other than what is in your essay or in other parts of the application. The author should be able to use their personal relationship to the applicant in order to justify their personal recommendation with specific examples.
7. The letter should use powerful and impactful words to note how the author knows the applicant, their vision of the applicant in their goal and what he/she would accomplish, and why the reviewers should invest in the applicant.
8. Review the letter carefully to ensure the information captures what is needed for the scholarship. Do not accept a letter that does not cover the criteria required. This is one reason to have several people on your option list so you can get the right letter for the specific scholarship.
9. Ensure the letter is no longer than one page, is addressed to the appropriate person or committee, is dated and signed and includes the author's contact information. Check carefully for grammatical and spelling errors.
10. Remember, your recommendation letter(s) can make or break a win.