

THOUGHTS ON PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Compiled by Ceci Stratford 1/17/2018 Rev. 2/17/18

A **scholarship recommendation letter** provides information regarding the character, qualities and achievements of a candidate which fulfill the basic criteria of a chosen scholarship. The author (usually a teacher or counselor) will need to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the scholarship's requirements in order to match the letter more precisely to the terms of reference of the award. Before writing their letter, the author should also interview the student regarding any relevant extra-curricular activities the candidate is involved in or any awards they may have received that they may be relevant.

Most scholarships are awarded to students with specific commitments, achievements, and goals. They are usually tailored to students pursuing a specific field of study, such as engineering, math, biology, or literary studies. However, a scholarship may instead be based upon athletic performance or the need for financial aid. By being aware of the guidelines and expectations of the scholarship, the author will be able to better validate their student's qualifications to receive it.

Who to Select?

Most often, this letter will be written by a teacher, a professor, or a counselor. However, depending on the scholarship criteria, an employer or athletic coach may also be an appropriate, or required, choice. What is most important is that the author understands the scholarship requirements and will be able to use their personal relationship to the candidate in order to justify their personal recommendation with specific examples.

(From www.eforms.com/recommendation-letter/scholarship)

Ensuring Success

Students aren't generally allowed to write their scholarship letters and ask their teachers to sign them. But there are some things students can do in order to ensure that the writing process goes as smoothly as possible. Students might compile a list of their achievements, for example, or they might provide copies of prior assignments the teacher has graded. Students might also provide details about the scholarship in question and remain open to any questions from the writer.

(From www.simpletuition.com/scholarships/letter-of-recommendation)

What a Letter of Recommendation should accomplish:

- Show that the writer knows what the scholarship application is for and what the qualifications for the scholarship are
- Act as a strong endorsement for student's qualities & confidence in his/her future success

- Illuminate a student's impressive qualities (e.g. compassion, energy, leadership skills, strong commitment to his/her goals, history of overcoming obstacles, achievements)
- Provide writer's anecdotes or observations of applicant; give examples of qualities; give stories
- Make the applicant "come alive" as a multi-dimensional person
- Show the applicant is qualified and deserves to receive the scholarship
- Show their passion and dedication to the field of interest
- Explain that if there are financial challenges, the applicant will succeed despite limited resources

What to include in your letter:

- How you know applicant and in what context
- Your vision of the applicant in their goal; what he/she would accomplish
- Why the scholarship donors/reviewers/sponsors should invest in the applicant
- Your contact information
- Powerful and impactful words

(From <https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-write-a-strong-recommendation-letter-for-scholarship>)

Additional Points:

- Address to appropriate person or committee
- Answer specifically what the scholarship asks for
- Don't recycle letters!
- Use a current date
- Writer should sign letter or at least have a validated electronic signature
- No longer than one page!