

WRITING RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

TIPS

- Be clear and straightforward with students if you have reservations about writing a letter; this could be a valuable learning opportunity for them and/or could ultimately lead to the student receiving a stronger letter from someone else
- Ask the student to provide you with details about the opportunity they're applying for and the qualifications they have for this experience (3-4 specific stories)
- Be aware of length requirements and due dates. Not following the instructions or requests of the college's admissions committee could result in harming your student's college applications
- Focus your letter on your firsthand experience with the student; this will make for a detailed and descriptive letter (rather than a generic letter)
- Do not use adjectives/descriptors without clear examples to back up your claims
- Address what makes the student special (have they overcome any specific challenges? Are they in the top 1% of students you've worked with in a 20-year career in higher ed?)
- Define Elon-specific awards for a non-Elon audience (i.e. what does it mean to be an Honors Fellow? A Lumen Scholar?)
- If a hard copy is requested, print your recommendation letter out on the letterhead of your school, reinforcing your professionalism and authority
- In your letter, you may feel obligated to provide potentially negative or neutral information. If this is the case, consider adding a request to contact you for further information regarding the student

RESOURCES

Center for Writing Excellence

<http://cwe.elon.edu>

Purdue University Online Writing Lab

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

UNC-Chapel Hill Writing Center, Letters of Recommendation

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/letters-of-recommendation/>

F O R M A T (Business Letter)

Recipient Name
Recipient Title
Recipient Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Salutation

Always address the recommendation letter to the appropriate person. Your student should provide this information for you. "To Whom It May Concern" is a last resort.

First Paragraph

The first paragraph of a recommendation letter explains your connection to the person you are recommending, including how you know them, and why you are qualified to recommend the person for employment or school.

Second Paragraph

The second paragraph of a recommendation letter contains information about the individual you are writing about, including why they are qualified, what they can contribute, and why you are recommending them. If necessary, use more than one paragraph to provide details.

Third Paragraph

When writing a letter recommending a candidate for a specific job opening, the recommendation letter should include information on how the person's skills match the position they are applying for. Ask for a copy of the job posting and a copy of the person's resume so you can target your letter accordingly.

Summary

This section of the recommendation later contains a brief summary of why are you are recommending the person. Use phrases like "strongly recommend", or "recommend without reservation" or "Candidate has my highest recommendation" to reinforce your endorsement.

Conclusion

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

Closing

Sincerely,
Recommender Name

Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email Address

EXAMPLE ONE

To Whom It May Concern:

It is a pleasure to write a recommendation for Ms. XYZ. She was my student majoring in Communication Design in final year session 2003 and now she has become a valuable faculty member in the department of Communication Design, ABC College, Lahore since 2010. Between that period she also achieved a Masters Degree in Multimedia Arts, 2006.

I consider XYZ a natural in the field of communication design. Through her time here she has exhibited the imagination, originality and flair that is required of a person who wishes to be a success in this field. She coupled this natural aptitude very well with a practical and adaptable approach. During this time it became evident to me that XYZ is very perceptive and possesses a wealth of creative abilities. Also, she is always motivated to do something different which is interesting and stimulating for design students. Her approach demonstrates her understanding of the underlying issues of design and design teaching.

XYZ has a great potential to do things very seriously. This is not only because of her natural abilities, but also because of her attitude towards her work. She believes in her work and her ability to excel, but she has never forgotten that it requires a great deal of effort. She is very much clear about her abilities and she is always into trying something new and exploring unusual concepts and materializes them through innovative tools. I think this is a main ingredient of a creative person.

I truly believe that the further specialization will provide her with quality education that will help her realize her potential. She is a very adaptable person with an outgoing, amiable personality. I can recommend her with great confidence for further specialization and advance studies would definitely enhance her creativity and imagination.

Sincerely,

Ms. ABC

EXAMPLE TWO

Dear Dr. XX and Internship Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write to recommend Student A for an internship in the Human Resources department at Company Z. I am the coordinator of a program at Elon called PACE (Providing Aid through Campus Employment), which provides a select group of talented students in our entering classes with the opportunity to work on campus to earn some money and help offset the expense of attending college. Student A is a student in the program and, quite honestly, one of the very best I have.

My relationship with Student A began before she arrived on campus in the fall of 2012. We selected her from a highly competitive group of students wishing to be part of the PACE program. She interviewed and was selected for a position in the Foreign Languages department, where she handles promotions and publicity, as well as assists multiple professors in the department with their administrative needs. About mid-way through the fall semester, she came back to me and asked if there were other opportunities available to her to earn more money, as she takes very seriously her responsibility to contribute as much as she is able to her college expenses. One of the jobs that was available was to work alongside our landscaping crew, tending to the flowers, shrubs, and gardens on our campus. Elon University is a designated botanical garden, and we take great pride in our campus appearance. This was a job I hadn't been able to "sell" to any of the students in the program. Most of them were looking for more traditional "student worker" jobs and I think many of them may have felt the job to be beneath them. But not Student A. She graciously and gratefully accepted the job and is currently in her second year as a student landscaper on our campus. I say with complete sincerity that I admire Student A tremendously and the landscaping crew loves her! She is a valued and trusted part of their team.

I was so impressed with Student A's work ethic and sense of responsibility that I invited her to serve as a teaching assistant last fall, and she went into that job with even greater enthusiasm and dedication. She made herself available to the students in the class, contributed to the curriculum and syllabus and achieved very high marks in the student evaluations at the end of the semester. She works diligently at three different jobs on campus, is active in several organizations, holding leadership positions in more than one of them, all while maintaining a solid GPA.

Student A is exceptional. She is bright, mature, focused, and hard-working. She is organized (she'd have to be to do all that she does!), responsible and extremely dependable. But perhaps most important, despite all of her many undertakings, she remains balanced. I think very highly of Student A as a person, a student and as an employee and have no doubt but that she would be an excellent intern at Company A.

I recommend Student A enthusiastically and without reservation for an internship with Company Z. Please feel free to contact me if I may answer any questions you might have about Student A.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Doe