

Three types of recommendation letters

Type of letter	From	Usual purpose
Employment recommendation	Employer, professor	Getting a job
Academic recommendation	Employer, professor	Getting into college or graduate school, receiving a scholarship or fellowship
Character reference	Friend, relative	Getting a job, winning an award, child adoption, court hearing, etc.

Employment recommendations

Whether you are laid off or leave your job on your own accord, a letter of recommendation from your employer can be a valuable tool for finding a new job. Such a letter is often preferable to listing your supervisor and his or her phone number on your resume. A reference letter

- Provides an organized analysis of your attributes and abilities
- Is a "fresh when written" appraisal not clouded by time
- Creates an unchanging assessment
- Saves future employers the effort of interviewing your former supervisor
- Saves your former supervisor the time and trouble of being interviewed

Importantly, obtaining a written letter also gives you insight into how your former employer perceives you-- on balance either favorably or unfavorably. With this information in-hand, you can spotlight a good reference or downplay a poor one.

Of course, if you must list a former employer as a reference and worry that he or she might contradict your glowing letter when called on the phone, we suggest finding out before it causes you a problem.

Academic recommendations

Letters of recommendation are required for acceptance to the vast majority of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Often applicants must provide three or more letters.

While requirements differ by institution, program and concentration, generally speaking successful academic recommendations should

- Provide testimony to your aptitude, curiosity and industriousness
- Demonstrate your maturity and seriousness of purpose
- Speak to your leadership ability
- Paint you as "well rounded"
- Compliment your character
- Include other pertinent information about you-- things not readily apparent from admission test scores or transcripts

Character references

Character reference letters are a special category of recommendation because they are usually written by friends, neighbors or relatives. These letters meet a variety of non-employment and non-academic related needs. Everything from gaining memberships and winning awards to child custody and adoptions. Character reference letters can also be useful in job seeking.

(Source: box.freeconcepts.com)

(Sample of a letter on reverse)

Note: Please print letter of reference on business letterhead.

[Date]

[Recipient Name]

[Title]

[Company Name]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Recipient Name]:

It is a genuine pleasure and honor for me to write this letter of reference for **[name of student]**. It is my understanding that **[name of student]** is being considered by your organization for the position of **[job title]**.

I have known **[name of student]** for the past **[number of months, semesters, years]** as **[he/she]** has taken the following courses which I teach: **[list courses, give brief description of content of course]**. As **[his/her]** professor, I have had an opportunity to observe the student's participation and interaction in class and to evaluate the student's knowledge of the subject matter. I would rate the student's overall performance in these subjects as exceptional.

In addition to **[name of student]** academics, **[he/she]** is very active on campus and in **[his/her]** community. **[List one or two specific examples of the student's performances]**. These examples show **[name of student]** has the initiative and drive to make projects successful.

I recommend **[name of student]** to you without reservation based upon **[his/her]** academic performance, leadership and my understanding of the position for which **[he/she]** is applying.

If you have any further questions with regard to her qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

(Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers)