

Letter-writer's Professional Address (for example: B-80 Benedum Hall)
City, State, Zip
Phone
Email

Letter Recipient's Title and Name (for example: Kendall Washington)
Scholarship Organization's Name (for example: Magnetek First Experiences in Engineering Scholarship)
Scholarship Organization's Address (for example: 151 Gamma Drive)
City, State, Zip

Date (note: for our scenario, this would be a date in April, 2010)

Dear _____: (Your "greeting" should be as specific as possible, for example: Dear Ms. Washington, if Ms. Washington is the Director of the scholarship committee).

Your Letter of Recommendation **must follow, exactly, the format you see in this template**. Note that this letter template is composed in "full block" format. All sections are aligned left and justified left and right. Paragraphs are not indented. "Full block" is easy to format, read, copy, and scan. Full block format is nearly always acceptable for professional correspondence

A well-written letter of recommendation conveys relevant information in professional, readable language. Usually, a letter of recommendation is written in the "first person" –the person writing can, and usually should, refer to herself or himself as "I." The letter writer should establish, early on in the letter, his or her qualifications for recommending the applicant. The letter-writer establishes these qualifications by stating his or her title and position, and by succinctly stating any further **relevant information**. Scholarship judges will need to know what qualifies the letter-writer to evaluate freshmen engineering students for a scholarship. What does the letter-writer **know about students and about engineering education** that makes him or her a credible source of information? How does the letter writer know **this particular student** (out of the 200-400 students who might pass through his or her classroom every semester) well enough to make **credible** statements and evaluations about this student?

The letter writer must **NEVER ASSUME** that the letter readers will automatically see the applicant as a good match for the particular scholarship. If the letter-writer **claims** that **this student** is an ideal candidate for **this scholarship**, the letter-writer **must include those CONCRETE details that logically support such claims**. If the letter-writer **claims** that the student is a conscientious high achiever, the scholarship committee **cannot believe this claim unless the letter-writer includes specific, supporting evidence**. It is the letter-writer's job to **SHOW how this student** is the kind of student the scholarship group is looking for. Effective supporting details include concrete descriptions ("Kira was elected the leader of a team of 8 students from various regional school districts. Under Kira's direction, this team of students from various locales and with varying scientific skill sets and interests, designed and built a sophisticated, path-following mini-bot which won first place from among 15 National Bot-Building Competition entries"). **CLEAR, SPECIFIC connections** you make between those details and your evaluative claims ("Kira is an hands-on innovator and an effective leader.") provide the **credible information** the situation demands.

The concluding section of this letter of recommendation should reinforce why this student and this scholarship are a good match. The letter-writer should "revisit" key points to further establish the connection between what the letter-writer knows about the applicant and what qualifications the scholarship-granting organization is looking for. **(Note: the word of the body of this document is, at this point, 439)**. In the letter's closing section, **the letter writer should avoid bland clichés and unsubstantiated hyperbole**. Description and phrasing that continues to support **this** applicant's qualifications for **this** scholarship will be most effective. The letter-writer might also thank the letter readers, in an appropriate, professional manner, for their attention to the potential recipient and to the letter-writer's recommendations.

In addition to the clarity of details and the strong connection between details and evaluations, a good letter of recommendation communicates the authority and credibility of the letter-writer via the professionalism

of presentation and tone. Every aspect of an effective letter should show **the seriousness and professionalism of the letter writer**. When writing this letter, choose wording that is natural and neither inflated nor overly informal; the language you, as the letter-writer, choose should promote accuracy and credibility. The author of a strong letter of recommendation should not sound sarcastic, silly, pompous, or condescending. One good review technique is to read a draft of the letter out loud. Does it sound dull and stuffy, full of unnecessary jargon or long, long sentences? Then you might need to revise for more active, clear communication. When reading your letter out loud, does it sound chatty, more like an IM or text message than like a professional description of significant qualifications? If so, you'll need to revise for a more substantive, professional effect. **Are there any spelling, grammar, punctuation or vocabulary errors? Proofread very carefully** for such error. Error in this and any writing seriously undermines the writer's authority and credibility. (put the word count for the body of your letter here: word count: 703).

Sincerely (an appropriate "closing" for most professional correspondence),

The letter-writer's signature

The Letter-Writer's Name (for example, Dr. Laura Lund)

The Letter-Writer's Position (for example, Professor, Bioengineering)