



How to Write a

SCHOLARSHIP REFERENCE LETTER

Salutation:

Ideally you have the full name and title of the person to whom the application is being submitted and you would address the letter to him or her. If you don't have a name, address the letter to the organization, scholarship or simply "Selection Committee". Try to avoid using "to whom it may concern."

Introduction Paragraph:

The opening paragraph has three goals:

1. Identify the applicant and the award he/she is applying for (this must be done in the first line).
2. Indicate how you know the applicant, and for how long you have known him/her (you want to establish that you are in a position to judge his/her character.)
3. Immediately make clear your opinion of the applicant.

Body:

The body of the letter takes up several paragraphs (at least two but no more than five.) This is where you describe the applicant's qualifications and qualities using descriptive adjectives.

Many award programs are looking for what kind of a person the applicant is, so it is often beneficial to talk about the applicant's character and not just his/her accomplishments. Pick qualities that tie into the specific type of award the applicant is applying for. You may also want to include information about the applicant's potential in his/her chosen field of study.

In discussing the qualities, support your statements with specific examples in which the applicant demonstrated those attributes. Examples are key. Be as concrete and specific as possible, and try to rank or compare the applicant to other students (e.g. "he is in the top 5%", or "I see this quality in her more than in any other student").

Closing Paragraph:

In the closing paragraph, reiterate your opinion of the applicant and his/her suitability for the award. Many letters also add a line offering to provide more information, and provide a phone number and/or email address for this purpose.

