

Guidelines for Writing Letters of Evaluation or Recommendation

1. State in the reference letter, "This information is provided at the request of [name of student or applicant], who has asked me to provide a letter of evaluation/reference." Statements such as this give justification for the communication and leave no doubt that the information was not given to hurt a person's reputation.
2. *Pertinent data should include:*
 - a. Description of type of school and relative size – small rural high school, large inner city junior high.
 - b. Student teacher/intern teaching responsibility, the area and age group – 7th grade child development unit
3. *Profile characteristics that could be described:*
 - a. knowledge of subject matter taught
 - b. classroom effectiveness
 - c. teaching techniques
 - d. communication skills
 - e. use of instructional resources
 - f. evaluation and assessment skills
4. *Personal characteristics that may be included:*
 - a. vitality and health
 - b. attitude
 - c. punctuality
 - d. cooperation
 - e. human relations skills
 - f. professionalism
5. When you prepare reference letters, be factual; do not editorialize. Avoid vague statements.
6. A brief anecdote of an incident which best depicts the candidate's abilities or aptitudes listed above can be very meaningful to the reader.
7. Observed performance-based statements provide the reader with a more objective account of the candidate's behavior.
8. Statements making personal value judgments should be used in a specific context. Certain value terms are overused and can become meaningless to the reader – i.e., outstanding, tremendous, capable, effective.
9. A good practice is to avoid giving personal opinions or feelings. However, if you make subjective statements or give opinions because they are requested, clearly identify them as opinions and not as fact.
10. If you give an opinion, explain the incident or circumstances upon which you base the opinion.
11. Comments made about co- and extra-curricular participation, or community related activities, as a student teacher/intern, may enhance the candidate's opportunities for employment.
12. Statements that rank or rate the student teacher/intern should be expressed so that they compare the candidate with a specific group. Example – "Jane Doe was the best student teacher of the sixteen with whom I have worked."
13. Do not include information that might indicate the individual's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, citizenship status, sex (unless by the individual's name it is obvious), or marital status.
14. The final written letter of evaluation/recommendation should be accurate and completed on school letterhead.

Some of the above guidelines were found at <http://www.nacweb.org/public/reference1.htm>.
Sample letters can be found at <http://www.nacweb.org/public/reference8.htm> and
<http://www.nacweb.org/about/public/formfaceref.htm>