

To Whom It May Concern:

Introduction

1. Hook: Start with a simile/metaphor, an absolute statement, a surprising fact, a colorful characterization, or a specific story.
2. The first line should provide the full name of the person that you are recommending.
3. State how long you have known the student and in what context.

Body (*Choose ideas from below based on your knowledge of the student and what "fits."*)

- **Discuss the student's work in your classroom.**
 1. Provide context if it was in person vs. virtual
 2. If it was during spring of 2020, how did student transition/persist?
 3. Is it timely, organized, creative, thorough, neat, insightful, unusual?
- **Describe how the student interacts with peers and adults/learning environment.**
 1. Are they respected by peers? Do they choose to associate with good people? Do they have good people skills?
 2. Do people, especially adults, trust them?
 3. Are they kind/sympathetic/considerate?
 4. Leadership: Do they lead by example or do they take charge? Do they work well in small groups? Participate actively and/or respectfully in whole class discussion? Work well independently? Understand how to break down complex tasks? Suggest modifications to assignments that make them more meaningful? Support students who have a more challenging time?
- **Describe the things that you will remember about the student.**
 1. Go beyond diligence and intelligence: Talk about humor, courage, kindness, patience, enthusiasm, curiosity, flexibility, aesthetics, independence, courtesy, stubbornness, creativity, etc.
 2. ALWAYS talk about work ethic if you can.
 3. ALWAYS talk about integrity, at least in passing, if you can.
 4. Unique qualities, or what sets them apart as an individual are good. What makes them who they are? It's good to talk about how a student deals with being different or deals with adversity if relevant.
 5. Talk about why you will remember them.
- **Describe how the student reacts to setbacks/challenges/feedback.**
 1. Detail any academic or personal obstacles overcome.
 2. How do they handle academic challenges? How do they advocate for themselves? Did the student make growth over time? Explain what the student did to make it happen.
 3. Do they teach themselves? Do they monitor their own learning? Do they apply feedback/learn from mistakes?
 4. What challenges in their personal life have they encountered? Are challenges on going, due to crisis, or significant events?
- **Provide evidence and examples of personal qualities.**
 1. Physical descriptions can be very useful here as a way to make students (who may look like everyone else on paper) memorable: bright smile, walks with a purpose, silent observer etc.

2. Think about anecdotes the student has told about their lives, ways they describe themselves
 3. Reference significant instances/interactions in class, projects or academic work, especially those that set a new bar for the class.
 4. Identify the student's engagement, level of work, and learning style in your class.
- **Include only first-hand knowledge of extracurricular involvement. No lists, please. With extracurricular activities halted in spring 2020 this information can fill in additional context.**
 1. Extracurriculars only matter because they show something about the student — a passion, a skill, a talent. The extracurricular is going away — what will they take with them? What will they bring to campus?
 2. Extracurricular achievements are best used as examples to demonstrate earlier points, not as a goal/paragraph in themselves.
 3. Think beyond the activity itself — think about reacting to setbacks, supporting team members, organizing events, making suggestions that changed how the team/group did things, setting an example, and growth over time.

Conclusion

1. Begin with an unequivocal statement of recommendation. "[Full Name] carries my strongest recommendation."
2. State what the student will bring to an institution (NOT why the student deserves acceptance).
3. Summarize the student's qualities, character, and accomplishments that you wish to emphasize.
4. End with an emotional comment — that you will miss them, that you have learned from them, that you are sorry to see them go, that they are your favorite, etc.