

A thick black L-shaped frame surrounds the text. It starts at the top-left, goes right, then down, then right again, and finally down to the bottom-right corner.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Facilitators:

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Outline

- Accepting the request
- Things to get from the student (slide 2)
- How to structure the letter (slide 3)
- How to avoid gender and racial bias (slide 4)
- Legal considerations (slide 5)
- Sharing the letter with the student

Things to get from the student

- Due date (in must be reasonable)
- Letter/web form info
- Resume
- Personal statements etc
- Address
- Key things about the program, job, etc. (to customize the letter)

- If multiple letters are needed, an excel sheet containing all of the above
- If necessary an interview to give you more talking points

What else helps?

How to structure

- Like an essay.
 - *Intro*
 - Thesis, big take away, something about place they are applying, organization to follow.
 - *Body*
 - Follow through on organization.
 - Don't qualify praise, proofread for gender/race/pronoun usage (next section)
 - *Conclusion*
 - "It has been my pleasure over the years to..."

Other structures/strategies you find effective?

Gender and racial bias in letter writing

- See University of Arizona PDF
- See Montana State website:
https://www.montana.edu/lachowieclab/dei/ref_letter_racial_bias.html

Other insights or strategies for avoiding bias in letters?

Legal considerations (not comprehensive legal advice)

- Are you actually writing a purposefully negative letter for an AC student?
- There is exposure to liability in letter writing
- Defamation and defenses – “truth of statement” and “qualified privilege.”
- Known dangers
- Discriminating on a protected category
- FERPA

Legal considerations (continued)

- Things to do:
 - *Be honest*
 - *Be temperate in language*
 - *I would ask up through dean, etc. if I knew about a danger issue*
 - *Be very careful about discriminating*
 - *Make sure you have an email from the student requesting letter*
 - *Be specific in who you address the letter and for what purpose*
- Always consider liability insurance through AAUP

Other thoughts or insights on legal exposure when letter writing?

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