

# WRITING STUDENT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS



## GETTING STARTED

Make it clear that you know the student and can write an informed letter.

As you write, consider the specific ACGME competencies (i.e. medical knowledge, patient care, professionalism, communication, practice-based learning and systems-based practice.) These are the skills that PD's are looking for in incoming interns.

Use specific examples of behaviors you have observed to inform your recommendation. A story regarding the time that your student specifically went back into a room and comfort a patient who had just received bad news is more powerful than simply stating that the student worked well with patients.

***Be honest but remember this is a recommendation not an evaluation.***

Consider the qualities about the student that you can recommend. You do not need to address and assess all of your expectations regarding medical students. Focus on your student's strengths.

***Your silence can speak as loudly as your words.***

Program directors can and will read in between the lines. If you worked with a student in a clinical setting but do not mention clinical skills they will assume these are not as strong.

Write a good  
letter in  
1-2 pages.

**Letters are due  
September 15  
for the NRMP  
residency  
match.**



# LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION BLUEPRINT

1

This paragraph should state your pleasure at writing a letter and tell the program how you know your student. You may also include an overall summary statement of the student's ability. Be aware of the hierarchy: the best I have seen in 20 years > truly or simply outstanding > outstanding > excellent > very good > solid > qualified.

2

This paragraph is the meat of your letter and should include the reasons for your recommendation. Consider the attributes that your student demonstrates which will make them a valuable addition to a program. Again, consideration of ACGME competencies is helpful, as are specific examples and stories about your student.

3

This optional paragraph can be used to highlight other characteristics of your student that may be helpful for the program to realize. It should NOT be used to review grades, step scores or extra-curricular activities that are available elsewhere in the student's application unless you are able to add additional context to this information. For example, if your student is very involved in research you might be able to discuss how the student brings this skill set to patient care, using evidence-based medicine in a clinical setting. Similarly if your student has spent significant time and effort on volunteer work you can discuss the congruence of this work with their clinical performance and ability to empathize with patients. You may also use this paragraph to help explain a challenge a student has met and provide additional information. If you have been working with a student who has clearly struggled but you have been impressed with their ability to reflect and move forward in the face of adversity, this is valuable information for the program. You do not need to highlight the struggle but rather the attributes of the student.

4

This closing paragraph should include an overall summary of the student's performance, highlighting the strengths you have observed.

# Tips for writing a student letter of recommendation



## KNOW THE STUDENT WELL ENOUGH

Offer to write a letter for students with whom you work closely when you provide feedback.



## DISCUSS STRENGTHS

Inform your students of the strengths that you can discuss. If you are unable to confidently recommend the student, let them know when they request the letter.



## MEET PRIOR TO REVIEW

Meet with your students immediately prior to writing the letter to review specifics of your time together.

## IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Details are important. Use letterhead, proofread the grammar very closely. Include the student AAMC ID number and the Letter ID from the ERAS cover sheet in the letter. Please sign all letters.



CAREERS IN MEDICINE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
RIO GRANDE VALLEY  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

cim@utrgv.edu