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How to write a reference for an employee

A recommendation letter (or a reference letter) is written by a manager (or coworker) to highlight an employee’s skills and achievements during the time they worked together. It also contains information about the employee’s attitude at work to give a potential employer a glimpse of what it’s like to work with them. Companies often request recommendation letters when conducting a background check before extending a job offer to an applicant. In some cases, they require applicants to send one a few weeks after submitting their resume. Students also use recommendation letters when applying for school admission, scholarship grants, and research grants. Do you know how to write a great letter of recommendation? (graphic source)In this guide, I’ll show you how to write a professional recommendation letter, so you know what to do when a colleague or former employee requests one from you. Why Make an Effort in Writing a Good Recommendation Letter? I know what you’re thinking. You’re not the one getting a job, so why bother writing a good letter? Below are three reasons it’s worth making an effort to write a good recommendation letter. A potential source of referral: What if by some twist of fate, you wind up applying where the person you recommended now works? If you helped them before, they’d be more inclined to return the favor. It’s a good professional deed, and it’s nice to know that what you wrote helped someone get a job. If the person who made the request was a model employee, then you owe it to that person to write a recommendation letter worthy of all the effort and sacrifices they made while working with you. How to Write a Recommendation Letter + Examples and Templates Here’s a breakdown of the different parts of a recommendation letter, plus examples to give you an idea of what each section includes. You can also download our FREE recommendation letter templates PDF file, which includes a letter for a laid-off employee. 1. Start With the Inside Address and Salutation Use the company’s letterhead to make your recommendation letter look formal. Put the date when you wrote the letter on the first line, and then write the recipient’s name, position, and business address below that. Here’s an Example to Follow October 22, 2017 John Smith Chief Marketing Officer, ABC Startup 123 Main St. Northeast Harbor, ME 04662 Since this is a formal letter, start the greeting with “Dear” followed by the right salutation for the recipient, so write either “Mr.”, “Ms.”, or their professional designation, such as “Professor” or “Dr.” for doctor. The use of informal greetings such as “Hi” or “Hello” may be frowned upon in certain industries where recruiters and decision-makers are strict about such professional formalities, so err on the side of caution. 2. Open Your Recommendation Letter Right Let’s look at how to start a letter of recommendation. The first paragraph or the opening of the recommendation letter is easy to write because all you have to do is mention the details of your working relationship with the person you’re recommending. Include: Your job title The name of the person you’re recommending Their job title Your working relationship: boss or co-worker Length of time you worked together Example “As the Project Manager for Spectrum Finance, I was Kevin’s direct supervisor from 2010 to 2013. We worked closely on several product launches, and I enjoyed watching him grow as a business analyst in our team.” 3. Write a Good Recommendation Letter Body The letter body has two to three paragraphs that include details of the skills, knowledge, and achievements of the person you’re recommending. To keep the letter concise, start with a list of the person’s areas of expertise, and then try to remember situations where you witnessed those strengths such as previous projects or a problem they solved at work. Once you have this list, pick two to three items that best represent the candidate’s value to a potential employer. You can also use the Challenge-Action-Result format to write a short but compelling story about the candidate. Write about your thoughts on the candidate’s soft skills or attitude as an employee in the last paragraph of the body. Employers don’t hire applicants based on technical skills alone, so mention positive attributes such as dependability, initiative, and honesty, as well. If you feel like those descriptors don’t fit the person you’re recommending, try: Good communications Leadership Creativity Analytical thinking Teamwork Example: “Cassie’s knowledge of marketing and expertise in public relations was a huge advantage to our business. She used her skills in influencer marketing and writing to get our small brand noticed by prominent publications such as Marie Claire and Cosmopolitan. She also completed her tasks with minimal supervision, that’s why I was confident in giving her more significant projects to handle. Despite her hectic schedule, she’s always on excellent terms with her colleagues and other teams.” 4. Nail the Recommendation Letter’s Closing Paragraph Write that you’d be willing to hire the person again, but only if you can honestly say this. If not, you can end the recommendation letter on a positive note by emphasizing how valuable the person’s contribution was to the company, or stress how that the person’s skills will be an asset to whoever hires them next. End the paragraph with an invitation to contact you if the recipient has follow-up questions. Examples “For all the reasons I wrote above, I give Mark my strongest recommendation for the position of Senior Web Developer. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.” “Louie is the kind of employee I would hire again with no hesitation. I know she’ll make an excellent graphic designer and a valuable asset to your team. Please email me if you have any questions.” 5. Close With a Professional Signature Don’t just write “Sincerely” followed by your name and leave it at that. Include your job title, office email address, and work telephone number below your signature to show the recipient that you’re a legitimate source of recommendation—not a phony paid to give a good recommendation. Those are the basic parts of a recommendation letter. If you want more examples, check out the fill-in-the-blanks template below and download the FREE PDF attachment for this tutorial. Date Recipient’s Complete Name Recipient’s Job Title Recipient’s Office Address Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, It’s my pleasure to recommend my former subordinate/co-worker, Name, for the position of Job Title in your company. Name worked with me as a Previous Job Title at Your Company’s Name for almost Number of Years. During that time, I was impressed by his/her overall performance, particularly in his/her knowledge in Skill. He/She consistently worked hard to achieve Result for our team. Name is a reliable Previous Job Title and a joy to work with who doesn’t hesitate to help his/her co-workers. He/she is also an excellent communicator and Soft Skill, that’s why he/she doesn’t have trouble maintaining a positive relationship with our clients. I’m confident Name will be a great asset to your team, just as he/she was in ours. Please contact me if you’d like to discuss Name’s professional experience further. Sincerely, Your name and job title Email address Office telephone number 3 Quick Tips to Write a Better Recommendation Letter Tip 1. Keep it Short The letter’s recipient could be a third-party recruiter, a company hired to do background checks, or the future manager of the person you’re recommending. Whoever it is, that person will be busy with other items on their to-do lists. They don’t have time to read a long and rambling letter, so keep your recommendation letter concise. Limit it to three to five paragraphs and no more than one page. Tip 2. Send it Using the Right Format If the company doing the background check sent the request, you could send the letter using the same method they used, unless their instructions say otherwise. If the request came from a former employee or co-worker, just ask them how they’d like you to send it. In most cases, employers prefer that you send the recommendation letter via email by pasting the contents of the letter in the body of the email, and attaching it in both PDF and MS Word format. Tip 3. Avoid Generic Descriptions Bland adjectives like hardworking, dedicated, and friendly, don’t help anyone. These words won’t add value to the application of the person you’re recommending, and it won’t help the recipient decide on the candidate fit either. These adjectives are nothing but empty promises that don’t demonstrate how the person exemplifies them. Replace these adjectives with a combination of strong verbs and specific examples. So instead of writing that your coworker is dedicated to their craft, talk about their eagerness to learn new skills and work on different projects. What If You Can’t Write a Positive Recommendation? Decline the request. I know it’s not as simple as it sounds, but that’s the best you can do without lying to yourself and the person who will read the letter. It’s also better for the candidate if you say no. If you wrote a lukewarm recommendation and their potential employer reads it, they might decide not to continue with the job offer. It might feel awkward to decline the request if you can’t provide a good reason for saying no. Just say you’re not comfortable writing a recommendation letter and that a letter from someone else might serve them better. If you really can’t back out because it’s company policy for you to provide a reference, just write a brief letter listing the person’s job title and responsibilities. Alison Green of Ask a Manager has more tips on this subject at her article on Inc. A job rejection letter informs employees that they have not been chosen for a job. Rejection letters give them this information formally and respectfully so that they can continue their job search. They are also known as employment rejection letters or candidate rejection letters.Make a good impression on the candidates you decline by sending them a rejection letter promptly. We’ve got templates below that will make it super fast and easy. 10 March 2017 Canadian Immigration 2017 To be eligible for most Canadian economic immigration programs, you need to have some work experience. For many streams, that work experience needs to be ‘skilled’ – meaning classified as NOC Skill Level 0, A, or B. So how do you prove that you have the right kind of work experience? Free Assessment First off, you need to find the National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes associated with each of your past positions. That can be a little more complicated than it sounds, so check out our guide to choosing the right NOC code for Canadian immigration. Once you’ve found the right NOC codes, you need to prove that they’re right by providing a letter of reference for each position. What is a Letter of Reference? If you’ve had multiple positions within the same company, try to get the company to issue separate letters for each position. If you cover multiple positions in one letter, make sure the person writing it breaks up each period of employment. The Ideal Letter of Reference How your letters of reference are formatted can make a big difference to the success of your file. The letter needs to be formal, and the more information it includes about the company issuing it, the better. Ideally, a letter of reference should: Be written on company letterhead Be signed by the responsible officer/supervisor Have the responsible officer/supervisor’s name and job title printed beneath the signature Include the company’s contact information Be stamped with the company’s official seal (if applicable) If possible, have the business card of the person signing it attached If your letters of reference don’t have these things, it might be a red flag to the visa officer that the employer issuing the letter is not genuine. There are also specific things that an ideal letter of reference should include: Your official job title The dates of your employment Your salary per week Your average hours per week A detailed list of your employment duties. The most important part of your letter of reference is the detailed list of your employment duties. It has to include your daily tasks and responsibilities, and should make up most of the content of the letter. Remember, the visa officer is not necessarily familiar with your industry, so make sure you avoid industry specific abbreviations or terms. Your duties should be listed clearly and concisely. The list of employment duties is how the visa officer confirms that you’ve chosen an appropriate NOC code. Every NOC code has an associated lead statement and list of duties. It doesn’t matter if your official job title doesn’t match up with a job title associated with your NOC code, as long as your employment duties match the lead statement and duties. That said, it’s suspicious if your letter of reference matches the NOC description exactly. The visa officer might believe that your letter of reference was created for the purposes of matching the NOC, rather than being an actual record of your work experience. In that case, the letter is considered “self-serving”, fraudulently obtained for immigration purposes, and not eligible for processing. What if I can’t get a Letter of Reference? A letter of reference is by far the best way to prove your work experience. But if, for a legitimate reason, you’re not able to get a letter of reference, then you can try to convince the visa officer with supplementary documentation. Some examples include: Employment contracts Promotion letters Paystubs Pictures of you at work Sworn declarations from previous colleagues You should also include a signed letter of explanation describing why you’re not able to provide a letter of reference. At the end of the day though, even if you have a perfect letter of reference, the final decision comes down to the visa officer. Whatever documentation you use, the goal is to put together a complete and thorough record of your employment to convince the visa officer that your work experience is genuine. In general, the more information you include, the more credible it will be to the visa officer, and the better your chances of being accepted. A Canadian immigration attorney, like Attorney Renaud Dery, can help you ensure that your letters of reference and other employment documentation meet Canadian immigration standards. At Canadim, we are with you every step of the way. We don’t just prepare our client’s immigration file; we prepare our clients for their new life in Canada too! Our free online assessment can help you discover all of your options to move to Canada permanently. Free Assessment Sincerely, The Canadim Team! www.canadim.com

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