

TIPS for APPLICANTS **on LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION for the** **Carol E. Macpherson Memorial Scholarship:**

(Note: Directions and sample to send to potential recommenders below.)

Writing to Request a Letter of Recommendation

1. Letters of recommendation should be from current/former instructors, advisors, or work supervisors who can speak to your educational goals and academic promise (or qualities that lead to academic success) - see ideas on “who to ask” below.

2. Ask your intended reference(s) in advance (preferably 3 weeks or more) if they have the time to submit a reference by deadline AND ask if they think they can write a strong reference letter for you. (If they do not feel like they can write a strong letter or are too busy at this time, find another person.)

3. Send information about yourself and the scholarship you seek:

About Yourself.

Quickly reintroduce yourself via email as even your favorite teacher does not know everything about you and may not remember you completely. Remind them of your past work as a student or employee and anything especially noteworthy that you did. Also let them know about your current career and/or life goals. Attach a copy of the personal statement you are submitting for the application which will include some of your academic and personal history and motivation. Attaching your resume may help them as they write their letter of recommendation since it is a snapshot of your career. Make sure there are no typos in your letter or resume.

Information about the scholarship including:

- The name of the scholarship, its purpose, and the link
 - The deadline for submitting their letter of recommendation (suggest putting the date in subject line AND double check the one in the Directions below)
 - Directions for how they are to submit their letter (in letter below)
 - The Directions and a sample Letter of Recommendation (see below). Since some people, especially employers do not often write letters of recommendation, and they are a very important part of the scholarship application, we have provided a sample (below).
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- Note: If you know the reference well, you might ask them if they would also be willing to review and edit your personal statement.

4. Follow up with a phone call in a day or two, to confirm receipt of your request for a letter of recommendation. It is also polite, and usually quite interesting, to ask them what is happening in their life.
5. Follow-up with your references about a week prior to the due date, with a friendly reminder to ask if the letter has been sent and to thank them again for this gift. Applications will not be forwarded to the Selection Committee without the two letters of recommendation.
6. If you receive the scholarship, write and tell your references and thank them!

Who Should I ask?

1. The strongest references for an academic scholarship is someone who has direct knowledge of your academic work at college.
 - a. A professor/instructor/teaching assistant from a class in which you received and A or B. If it is a big class, it helps if you have met with them during the semester, but don't let that stop you - instructors from large universities are used to getting requests.
 - b. An academic advisor. Again, it is best if you have visited with your advisor and sought advice when you were a student, but don't let that stop you.
 - c. Option: High school teacher if you are a recent grad.
 - d. Option (if you are planning to apply for this scholarship at some future date): If you have not been in school for awhile, advisors recommend that you take a course from a community college, excel in that course, and meet with the instructor a time or two to discuss the course and your goals (always recommended). This should help you earn a good letter of recommendation and help you start to form good study habits.
2. Other professional, non-academic options.
 - a. A program director or staff member from a student organization, department or community organization you are/were involved with, preferably at a leadership level.
 - b. A past or present employer who had direct knowledge of your work ethic, critical thinking and, possibly, leadership skills.
 - c. A volunteer organization's leader who can address your leadership skills, contributions, work ethic, problem-solving skills, etc. Can include religious or spiritually-based volunteer work.
 - d. Recent coaches who have engaged with you significantly.
 - e. If you have little work experience, and cannot find a professor who will agree to write a letter, you might look for another student who worked on an in-depth project with you.
3. **Never** use family members as references. Scholarship readers want objective assessments of your potential, family members are not objective.