

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE LOR WRITING

SAMPLES INCLUDED



Letter of Recommendation

To start with, here's a **quick recap of the points to remember before you ask your referees for your LORs!**

- Give your referee at least a month's time to write the letter. A rush job is a bad job, after all.
- Wherever possible, try to get an LOR from referees who are well known & published authorities in their respective fields. The higher up your referee is placed, the stronger is his/her recommendation.
- Keep a list of backup referees, so if one of your primary referees declines, you have other options.
- Supply all the information they may need in a neatly typed-out document.
- Do ensure that you share a great rapport with all your referees! This will allow them to write an honest, glowing recommendation for you.
- Your LOR must be typed (not handwritten) on the university letter head and placed inside a sealed envelope. Otherwise, the authenticity of your LOR is at question.
- Do ensure that your LOR is not just a generic statement of your capabilities and potential, but also includes a few specific instances of extraordinary performance or initiative that you have demonstrated in your field.

WHAT DOES YOUR LOR HAVE TO BE?

1) Personalized: Your LOR is a window for the admissions committee to know all about what those who have worked with you in the past, feel about working with you. Be sure that it has all the relevant details you want them to know about.

2) Honest: It's always better to get your LORs written by your professors and superiors at work rather than just pinching one off the internet. Moreover, adding non-relevant or untrue details is a strict no-no, as the highly experienced reviewers can smell insincerity from a mile away.

3) Concise: Going on a relentless tirade about your entire profile might not be the smartest thing to do on your LOR. Remember that the universities have thousands of LORs to review every intake season, so make sure that the first impression is convincing enough. Most universities recommend that you keep your LOR around 500 words in length, so do take care to adhere to the word limit mentioned, if any.

We shall now take a look at 3 well-drafted LORs of 3 different students with varying profiles. While 2 of them have been written by professors, the third one is from the applicant's immediate senior at work!

Make sure to find out whom the universities want your LORs to be from, and in which format they expect them to be sent, as different institutions have different requirements.

Most universities, however, require around 3 LORs out of which at least 2 need to be from professors whom you've worked closely with in the past!

Let's delve right in!

Sample LOR #1 - Letter from a Research Guide (Academician)

To,
The Admission Committee,

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation in favor of Ms. <STUDENT NAME>, who has recently applied to your reputed University for the Doctor of Philosophy program. I have known Ms. <STUDENT NAME> in the capacity of being her Project Guide and have been acquainted with her for a good period, during which she has proved to be diligent and adroit at performing research in her field.

Under my guidance, Ms. <STUDENT NAME> had developed a project on 'Dissociative Electron Attachment for n-Methyl Pyrrole' and was highly appreciated for the data obtained for the SIMION 8.0 software where she simulated different trajectory particles in the designated setup. She was also praised for assisting one of the colleagues from IISER Bhopal in sample testing the time of flight mass spectrometry. She later shifted to velocity map imaging setup where she recovered useful feasible data of the sample after further processing and symmetrization. Besides generating impressive data and simulation results, she was also commended for her sheer perseverance throughout the project and her desire to learn, comprehend, and work on tasks independently. She got herself acquainted with the complete apparatus thoroughly and executed tasks autonomously. She would not only approach me for performance evaluation but would also acknowledge suggested amendments and rectifications.

Based on her project work, Ms. <STUDENT NAME> had undertaken presentations on the 'Time of Flight Mass Spectrometer', which was based on her initial understanding of the project after a brief read-through of the research paper and on 'Dissociative Electron Attachment for n-Methyl Pyrrole', which was the final presentation demonstrated after the accomplishment of the project in the presence of an external examiner and myself. She displayed informative presentations in an appealing way which showed her strong prospect in the domain. She secured good scores in her lab work during the development phase of the project by working extra hours and operating the apparatus along with the assistance of a postdoctoral fellow.

Ms. <STUDENT NAME> had been an industrious and ebullient student who has a great penchant towards acquiring advanced and extensive erudition. She indulged in assignments with an optimistic attitude and embraced constructive criticisms in order to precipitate a flawless performance. She possesses requisite knowledge in her domain and despite shortcomings, she strives to reach excellence by constantly struggling to ameliorate herself.

Having observed Ms. <STUDENT NAME> discharge her duties from close quarters, I can ensure that her remarkable attributes will stand her in a good stead over the course of the intense Doctorate program. Her indefatigable drive to flourish coupled with domain expertise will empower her to meet the high standards set by your university. Hence, I am confident that Ms. <STUDENT NAME> will be a phenomenal addition to your university's academic community and grant her my strongest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Dr. <REFEREE NAME>

--XYZ--

Department of --XYZ--

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research

DISCLAIMER: Certain Names have been removed/hidden to protect the privacy of the concerned individuals.

Sample LOR #1 - Letter from a Research Guide (Academician)

Analysis

1st Paragraph: This elucidates the nature, duration and type of relationship between the referee and the student.

2nd Paragraph: The specific details of the research-work done by the student finds mention here

3rd Paragraph: More pointers about the student's achievements in her field, along with instances that demonstrate the student's initiative at performing research and achieving academic excellence.

4th Paragraph: Testimony of the student's work ethic, commitment towards self-improvement and other traits that the referee has observed

5th Paragraph: Conclusion that embodies the conviction held by the referee that the applicant would indeed prove to be a valuable asset to the university.

Sample LOR #2 - Letter from a College Professor (Academician)

To,
The Admission Committee,

I am writing this letter of recommendation for <STUDENT NAME> in support of his application to the master's program at your respected university. I had the pleasure of working closely with <STUDENT NAME> through his final year project and internship during which I recognized his deep passion and determination to excel in the field.

<STUDENT NAME> is an exceptionally talented individual with a plethora of skills that immediately set him apart from his peers. He conducted himself proficiently through his internship and performed excellently in the training tests. I handled the lab sessions for Artificial intelligence and got to know about his interest in the practical implementation of the concepts he learned in class. His competence and consistency through his final project not only highlighted his aptitude to grasp concepts rapidly but also his analytical and application-oriented mindset. Unsurprisingly, he performed well in his lab sessions and his project received the best scores for the high quality of industry standard architecture and practicality employed.

<STUDENT NAME> is a charismatic leader who works effortlessly with others. He led a team of six members in his internship where his energy, confidence, and sincerity set an example to the rest. His keen observation skills led him to comprehend problems easily, to delegate tasks and promote an environment of progress and productivity. He managed simultaneous responsibilities and accepted different ideas and inputs to formulate the best approach.

Moreover, <STUDENT NAME> is an eloquent speaker with the ability to express his ideas in a lucid and logical manner. His presentation on the --XYZ-- was detailed and interactive. He incorporated an easy-to-use and eye-catching user interface as he communicated the intricate nuances of the topic without losing sight of the bigger picture. He was thorough in his research with structured and thought-provoking responses to follow-up questions.

Besides his academic ventures, <STUDENT NAME> was the secretary for the technical club in the Annual college fest and executed some of the best technical events on campus. He is an avid learner with a disciplined attitude and the ability to allocate his time effectively in order to gain from every opportunity. I specifically commend him for his brilliant performance which placed him at the second rank in the Hackathon for smart cities as well.

On a personal level, <STUDENT NAME> is friendly and kind-hearted, treating those around him with the utmost respect. He is self-driven, ambitious, and diligent to achieving his goals. He is committed to pursuing a career in the field and persists even in the face of adversities. These are only a few reasons as to why I believe that he would make an invaluable addition to your program, and therefore I strongly recommend his application to your university without any qualms.

Sincerely,
--XYZ--
Assistant Professor
Department of Computer Engineering

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Sample LOR #2 - Letter from a College Professor (Academician)

Analysis

1st Paragraph: Once again, the LOR opens with describing the nature, duration and type of relationship between the referee and the student.

2nd Paragraph: The specific details of the research-work done by the student finds mention here, along with the aptitude shown by the student in his domain.

3rd Paragraph: Information that tells the universities more about the student's leadership skills, sincerity, prowess at performing research and the initiative he demonstrated in learning new skills.

4th Paragraph: Details pertaining to the student's performance in co-curricular activities and other personal traits that the referee has noticed.

5th Paragraph: Conclusion that embodies the conviction held by the referee that the applicant would indeed prove to be a valuable asset to the university.

Sample LOR #3 - Letter from a Superior at Work (Professional)

To,
The Admission Committee,

I have known Mr. <STUDENT NAME> while closely working with him as his project leader in the Banking and Financial Services department at Tata Consultancy Services. From our association, I evaluate <STUDENT NAME> to be an exceptionally knowledgeable and steadfast professional driven by a pursuit of excellence. It is my pleasure and privilege to recommend him for the graduate program at your university.

TCS combines technical expertise and business intelligence to catalyze change and deliver results. My department - --XYZ-- is a strategic business unit of TCS, dedicated to providing business application solutions to financial institutions globally. TCS Financial Solutions has compiled a comprehensive product portfolio under the brand name of --XYZ--. With a global customer base of more than 240 institutions operating in over 80 countries, TCS Financial Solutions delivers state-of-the-art software solutions for the banking, insurance, and capital market industries worldwide. Working as an Associate System Engineer (Developer), <STUDENT NAME> displayed a consistent and commendable performance and proved to be an invaluable asset to my team.

Bolstered by his flawless domain knowledge and technical expertise, <STUDENT NAME> successfully completed tasks with great diligence. One of the major projects we worked together was on ISY (InterBank Systems) for PostFinance, Switzerland. ISY product is used by PostFinance for the crucial task of inter-bank money transfer processing. <STUDENT NAME> started work on the project performing Junit tasks, writing test cases in Java. He was then entrusted with database maintenance along with packaging of delivery of SQLs to the onsite team at Switzerland and System Integration Testing team at Bengaluru. He was further responsible for configuring Jenkins and its maintenance and for the upgradation of OCP framework.

<STUDENT NAME> joined the project as a fresher at a very crucial point. He was expected to work at a fast pace and with accuracy under an exacting timeline for the launch of our product. In addition to the daily tasks at work, he had to take immense effort to quickly familiarize himself with the new project and make himself equipped to work with the experienced team. His role involved a lot of on-site implementation. I appreciated him for swift and efficient performance in troubleshooting. <STUDENT NAME> took a great initiative in resolving the issues and required minimal to no supervision even when working under pressure. A quick learner and an adaptable individual, he performed exceptionally well and received the 'Star of the Month' award.

Thriving in collaborative environments, his terrific communication and interpersonal skills made <STUDENT NAME> a fine team player. Always willing to learn and take up new challenges, he proved to be a reliable, resourceful asset for the team. He attended seminars and workshops, polishing his skills and keeping himself updated in the field. Outside the workplace, <STUDENT NAME> displayed great sportsmanship and played in the cricket team as well.

Displaying unmistakable traits of a determined achiever, <STUDENT NAME> is poised for great success. I consider him among the top 10% of his peers. <STUDENT NAME> has my strongest recommendation for the graduate program at your university. I am confident that he will be a great fit for the program. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding his background and qualifications. I would be happy to help.

Sincerely,
<REFEREE NAME>
Project Lead - --XYZ--
Tata Consultancy Services

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Sample LOR #3 - Letter from a Superior at Work (Professional)

Analysis

1st Paragraph: Explains the nature of the relationship and the opinion his team-leader at work has of him as a professional.

2nd Paragraph: Includes a concise description of the nature of work done by the department the applicant has worked in and the scope of his contribution to the same.

3rd Paragraph: Details pertaining to the specific ways in which the applicant has contributed to the organization and his achievements in areas pertaining to his field.

4th Paragraph: Words that bear testimony the applicant's ability to perform under pressure, initiative shown at learning new skills and details of his achievements and recognition he received at work.

5th Paragraph: Mention of the applicant's co-curricular pursuits and other personal traits that the referee has noticed followed by a conclusion that embodies the conviction held by the referee that the applicant would indeed prove to be a valuable asset to the university.

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