

Information That Will Enable Me to Write You a Strong Letter of Recommendation for Graduate School

Your name: _____

Classes you took from me, and the grades you earned: _____

In what other capacities have you known me (e.g., as my advisee, my TA, etc.)?

The results of a survey of 143 graduate programs in clinical, experimental, and industrial-organizational psychology (Appleby, Keenan, & Mauer, 1999) indicated the following skills and characteristics (listed in order of their rated importance) are what these programs are most interested in learning about candidates from letters of recommendation. One of the most successful ways in which you can convince a graduate school admissions committee that you possess these skills and characteristics is to have the people who write your letters of recommendation describe you as a person who possesses them. In order to help me write the strongest letter I can for you, please provide me with a specific example of something you have done during your college career that will allow me to say that you possess these skills and characteristics and will also allow me to support my statement with specific evidence. For example, if you want me to say that you possess "teaching skills/potential," you may want to describe how you created a variety of types of test questions in your Psychological Testing class, the oral presentations you made in your classes, and the fact that you volunteered to teach one of my classes while I was at a convention. It is unnecessary for you to fill in all the blanks; no one possesses all these skills and characteristics. Give this task some careful thought. Your time will be well spent, and I will be able to write you a stronger letter of recommendation.

Motivated and hard-working

High intellectual/scholarly ability

Research skills

Emotionally stable and mature

Writing skills

Speaking skills

Teaching skills/potential

Speaks articulately and persuasively

Works productively as a member of a team

Plans and carries out projects successfully

Thinks logically and creatively

Remains open-minded during controversies

Identifies and actualizes personal potential

Writes clearly and precisely

Adapts easily to organizational rules and procedures

Comprehends and retains key points from written materials

Gathers and organizes information from multiple sources

Reference

Appleby, D. C. (2000, Spring). Job skills valued by employers who interview psychology majors. *Eye on Psi Chi*, 3, 17.

Information That Will Enable Me to Write You a Strong Letter of Recommendation for a Job

Your name: _____

Classes you took from me, and the grades you earned: _____

In what other capacities have you known me (e.g., as my advisee, my TA, etc.)?

A recent survey of employers (Appleby, 2000) willing to interview psychology majors indicated the following skills and characteristics (listed in order of their rated importance) are the most important in their hiring decisions. One of the best ways to convince a potential employer that you possess these skills and characteristics is for the people who write your letters of recommendation to describe you as a person who possesses them. Please provide me with specific examples of things you have done during your college career that will allow me to say that you possess these skills and characteristics and will also allow me to support my statement with specific evidence. For example, if you would like me to say that you have "shown initiative and persistence," you may want to describe how you proposed a new activity for the Psychology Club, wrote a proposal to obtain funding from student government, coordinated that activity with the psychology faculty, and successfully carried out the new activity. It is not necessary for you to fill in all the blanks; no one possesses all these skills and characteristics in equal strength. Give this task some careful thought. Your time will be well spent, I will appreciate your effort and, I will be able to write you a stronger letter of recommendation.

Deals effectively with a wide variety of people

Displays appropriate interpersonal skills

Listens carefully and accurately

Shows initiative and persistence

Exhibits effective time management

Holds high ethical standards and expects the same of others

Handles conflict successfully

Works well with others

Creative and original

Strong knowledge of area of study

Strong character or integrity

Special skills (e.g., computer or lab)

Capable of analytical thought

Broad general knowledge

Intellectually independent

Possesses leadership ability

Reference

Appleby, D. C., Keenan, J., & Mauer, B. (1999, Spring). Applicant characteristics valued by graduate programs in psychology. *Eye on Psi Chi*, 3, p. 39.