

KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS KAPĀLAMA  
COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

**GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STUDENT:**

1. Select a person who is familiar with your capabilities – a teacher, a coach, dorm advisor, employer, minister, youth group leader, club advisor, etc.
2. Allow **30 days** for the recommendation letter to be completed. (Remember, it is **your** responsibility to know deadline dates for college and scholarship applications. Be sure to follow-up prior to deadline.)
3. Give the recommender a copy of this “Guidelines” form.
4. Attach a copy of your resume.
5. IF APPLYING ONLINE, inform your academic instructor **at least 30 days before the deadline** that he/she will be sent an email from the college/scholarship providing instructions and an online link to complete the recommendation.
6. IF APPLYING BY PAPER, provide your teacher **with a stamped envelope** addressed to the college. (Note: If the college requires all materials to be submitted together by you, ask your teacher to return the recommendation to you in a SEALED envelope).
7. Thank your teacher and if possible, a copy of the recommendation should also be sent to your counselor to be placed in your file for future reference.
8. Recommender has agreed to write a letter of recommendation for me. The deadline is \_\_\_\_\_.

**HINTS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION WRITER**

Thank you for agreeing to write a recommendation for this student. When completed, please send the letter in the stamped addressed envelope provided by the student. **If possible, a copy of your letter should be sent to his/her counselor for future requests by colleges or scholarship organizations. Please be aware that your letter will not be considered confidential and will be shared with students and/or parents upon request.**

Your letter of recommendation can play a vital role in the college admissions process. It can, and often does, make a difference! The purpose of the letter of recommendation is to “Flesh out” the “bones” of the basic information the student has provided on his/her application form. One college admissions counselor said, “The tone of the letter should speak to the student as a complex person. It should present causes for behavior, reasons for selective interest, and patterns of performance in class.”

The following portions of this “Guidelines” offer suggestions as to format and structure of a recommendation letter, as well as a list of descriptive words that may enhance the letter.

## **THE HEADING**

- Date of Letter
- **LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR {Student's Name}**  
(No salutation is necessary.)

## **THE FIRST PARAGRAPH**

The opening sentence may include several attention-getting adjectives describing the student. The first paragraph should also include how long you have known the student and what your relationship is to her/him.

*“Kanani is a bright, articulate and motivated student who has often energized my World History classroom discussions with her enthusiasm, wit and intelligence. In this required social studies class of 25 above average, college bound students, Kanani is always prepared and ready to contribute her ideas or ask insightful questions.”*

## **THE BODY OF THE LETTER**

Tell the admissions or scholarship committee things that are not provided elsewhere on the student’s application. Think about DESCRIBING the individual rather than merely recommending him/her. Anecdotes add significantly to the strength of a letter.

- What stands out about this student? How may the admissions committee differentiate this student from other applicants? Give examples to support your view.
- Give your insight into the individual. Comment on such things as:

motivation	leadership	initiative	potential for growth
energy	creativity	integrity	maturity
independence	enthusiasm	commitment	critical thinking skills

How were the aforementioned qualities in your class, club, dorm, workplace, etc.? Give examples to support your view.

- Does the student show evidence of ability to:

accept criticism	influence teamwork
make friends easily	performs well under pressure
seek academic challenge	accept responsibility for personal behavior
adjusts to demanding schedules	accept and develop a personal definition of success
set an example of positive conduct	

### **DO'S**

- Use anecdotes, use anecdotes, use anecdotes!!!
- Focus on the student's performance, behavior, and personality as manifested in your class.
- Use your school, company, organization's letterhead for your letter.

### **DONT'S**

- Avoid the use of nondescript words which tend to dilute the effectiveness of the letter (nice, decent, competent, pleasant, good, fairly, satisfactory).
- Avoid commenting on extracurricular activities unless you are tying them in to the kind of student/person he/she is. Is the activity indicative of certain personality traits? For instance, does the student "blend" music and academics or athletics and academics? How?
- Avoid using words or phrases which describe the student's physical appearance (attractive, handsome, cute, pretty, good-looking, pixyish, strapping, etc.).
- Avoid using the same phraseology in describing different students. Some colleges read applications in batches according to secondary schools.

### **THE CLOSING PARAGRAPH**

The closing paragraph should summarize your thoughts about the individual as a student and person. Avoid concluding your recommendation by saying that you recommend the student "to the college of his/her choice" or "to any institution of higher learning."

## **WORDS THAT ADD SPECIFICS**

### **1. Mental Qualities:**

astute	gifted	prudent	creative	innovative
subtle	erudite	talented	inquisitive	shrewd
reasonable	observant	scholarly	inventive	quick-witted
perceptive	intellectual	rational	capable	discerning
clever	learned	precocious	wise	ingenious

### **2. Moral Qualities:**

idealistic	straightforward	exemplary	responsible	faithful
temperate	trustworthy	truthful	humble	reliable
respectful	honorable	honest		

### **3. Social Qualities:**

tactful	affable	sociable	warmhearted	confident
courteous	sensitive	gracious	enthusiastic	good-humored
cheerful	polite	amiable	jovial	genial
cooperative	cordial	convivial	amicable	ebullient

### **4. General Personal Qualities:**

distinguished	admirable	influential	philosophical	earnest
impressive	generous	benevolent	resolute	conscientious
charitable	munificent	sympathetic	assiduous	unaffected
industrious	resourceful	zealous	witty	candid
taciturn	responsive	reticent	patient	self-starter
amenable	imperturbable	humane	indomitable	eloquent
tolerant	persistent	scrupulous	ambitious	efficient
self-reliant	courageous	serious	uncompromising	
natural	serene	gentle		

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