

APTA Honors & Awards Program Recommendation Letter Guide



Strengthen Your Recommendation Letter

Being asked to write a nomination letter or a letter of recommendation is an honor. Someone thinks your opinion is valuable. This guide will help you strengthen your letter of recommendation and boost your nominee's chances to receive the recognition they deserve!

Before You Write Your Recommendation Letter

Before you write the first word, put some time into getting the background on the award and the candidate. Try to research the history of the award. APTA lists award criteria for each of the [awards](#) on their individual webpages. Review it and note areas that fit your nominee. Take a look at the [list of past recipients](#) and look for qualities you may be able to highlight when you write your own letter.

How to Start Your Letter — Setting the Stage

In your introduction, set the stage by describing who you are and how you know the nominee. From there, you can segue into describing all the reasons the nominee deserves the award, pulling in as many details as you can. In addition to the specific ways the nominee has met the criteria listed for the award, give examples of actions that illustrate personality characteristics that make them deserving, including their passion for helping others or their lifelong commitment to her chosen profession.

Be Explicit — Details Matter

Be explicit when describing what the nominee has done to make themselves stand out, why this was important to you, and what difference they have made to you and others in their community. What are their most important contributions? What makes this nominee memorable? What specific activities, situations, or contexts provide examples of how the nominee has made a difference? What impact have their contributions had on you? Consider the kinds of personal qualities and skills for which the award is given and describe how the person you are endorsing expresses those qualities or abilities. List your nominee's achievements. These narratives paint a picture that helps those reading the letter "see" the nominee in action.

Is Your Nominee in the Know?

If your nominee is aware they are being nominated for an award, do not hesitate to inquire about what they would like you to include in your letter. Are there one or two strengths that they would like you to highlight? Give them an opportunity to share which items from their CV should be expanded upon in your letter. Intentionally use and incorporate the language used in the award criteria to highlight the nominee's strengths.

Remember, APTA frequently gives honors and awards based on recommendation letters that provide specific details, cases, and examples of the nominee's accomplishments and qualifications.

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