

## RECOMMENDATION LETTER : AFTER

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<DATE>

Dear Admissions Committee:

I take great pleasure in recommending Ms. XXXX, one of my favorite students, for admission to the Ph.D. program in Applied Mathematics at the XXXX University. She is very diligent, intelligent, personable, and analytical. Perhaps her greatest strength is her oral and written communications skills which manifests itself in her outstanding research presentations, which are always significantly superior than the presentations of her peers.

Originally enrolled in the Geographic Information System section, I first met Ms. XXXX when she transferred to our School of Mathematics and Statistics in 2009. She immediately impressed me during her interview due to her passion for mathematics as well as her clarity and eloquence in explaining her interest. She had taken the initiative to audit courses such as *Mathematical Analysis* and *Advanced Algebra* in the department of Mathematics, and had a good understanding of mathematical concepts such as real numbers and the completeness axiom. She also displayed a great desire to learn more about solution spaces and null spaces of linear equations.

As a leader of a panel responsible for the Defense of Application for the National Undergraduates Innovating Experimentation Project, I was fortunate to review Ms. XXXX's work. Ms. XXXX supervised a project titled "The Influence of Population Aging on Economic Growth," on behalf of her team. During the defense, she made a succinct yet comprehensive introduction of her team's research design, and vividly illustrated the remarkable impact of the aging population on social and economic development. I noticed a transformation in her from her initial interview as she matched her intellect and eloquence with newfound maturity and confidence. She obviously excels in her presentation and research skills. When confronting challenging questions by panel members, her accurate answers showed her versatility of adapting her approach to changing circumstances, which is extraordinary among her peers.

I also had the pleasure of teaching Ms. XXXX as a temporary professor for *Infinitesimal Geometry* for one month. She was fully engaged and emerged as a leader who consistently asked thought-provoking questions about the material; she enjoyed leading discussions during the class. I appreciated her ability to integrate knowledge from related courses, including *Mathematical Analysis*, to solve complex problems. I especially remember her insightful analysis about the definition of a smooth curve.

In summary, I give Ms. XXXX my highest recommendation for admission to the XXXX State University. I am confident that she will succeed, and equally confident that she will substantively contribute to your program. Please give Ms. XXXX the utmost consideration for admission to your prestigious school.

Sincerely

XXXXX

Associate Dean

School of Mathematics & Statistics

XXXX University - Country

## CRITIQUE SAMPLE

Hello,

Thank you for sharing with me this intriguing letter of recommendation, and allowing me to suggest some changes and offer some feedback. I think most of the essential elements are here, and what I've mostly done has been to adjust the tone and perspective a bit while ensuring that all grammar and usage is as appropriate and professional as possible.

First of all, it's helpful to give some brief details of the recommender's background and his relationship with you so that the admissions committee can understand the significance of his or her viewpoint. It's important to indicate how long has the recommender known you and in what context. I see that you've conveyed this here in describing each of your interactions, but for the most part I get the impression that these were in a rather formal context amid a large group. It might be helpful if the letter can talk about one particular one-on-one interaction the Associate Dean might have had with you during class intervals or elsewhere and what his personal impressions might have been in that context.

In terms of how your recommender describes you, remember that in English the most persuasive writing can be conveyed through "showing" rather than "stating." Simply praising you actually comes off as weak, and ironically the more elaborate the praise the weaker it can seem. In your transfer interview, for example, you'll see that we've changed the description of your performance as "beyond the expectation of all the teacher judges on the spot" and instead put your presentations in the context of how you compare to others and cited some of your specific strong points in your topical area.

In fact, a powerful recommendation letter would include not only praise but also constructive criticism. If possible, the recommender could mention things that you still lack, especially in regard to future goals, and how you will benefit from a graduate program. It would also be good to mention how the recommender has observed you improving over time – that shows capacity to learn and also reflects a closer relationship with you.

In regard to tone, we need to be careful that it is not too distant and formal. This is a balancing act, as you naturally hope that the Assistant Dean comes across as objective while also conveying the significance of his position and viewpoint; but at the same time you wouldn't want him to appear detached or perfunctory in his recommendation for your further study.

In addition to adding details such as personal interactions, we can pay attention to small things like how he consistently addresses you as "Miss XXXXX" rather than using your given name. Usage varies, naturally, but if you are applying to an American school this might come across as disinterested or even possibly a bit condescending, especially when speaking of an adult female student.

It's also better to use more modern usage such as "Dear Admissions Committee" rather than "Dear Sir or Madam," and avoid stilted language such as "I recommend Ms XXXX without reservation and shall appreciate your favorable consideration." Finally, I would try to avoid being generic and tailor the letter to the program where possible: instead of saying "your graduate program," for example, it would be good to mention the school and specific degree program by name.

I hope these changes and recommendations may be helpful, and we appreciate your choosing TopAdmit!