Letters of Recommendation

LORs are one of the most important parts of your residency application. The following information will help you as you collect and choose the LORs you will use to support your residency candidacy.
Letters of Recommendation

• Tips:
  – Have a resume for your letter writer
  – Have a personal statement for your writer
  – Ask the writer if s/he feels comfortable writing a strong LOR
  – Use the ERAS cover letter to indicate your FERPA choice
  – Enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard to have the letter writer send to you when s/he finishes writing your LOR.
Letters of Recommendation

• How do I choose an LOR? Choose based on…
  – The LORs you actually have
  – Someone who has seen you in action
  – The person who gave you a high grade
  – Letter writers who have connections
  – Letter writers in your preferred area of specialty
  – Letter writers with academic titles
  – Letter writers from late in your 3rd or early 4th year
Letters of Recommendation

• What does a good LOR look like?
  (“Good” LORs make up about 65% of all LORs received)
    – Mentions your accomplishments as described on your resume
    – Comments on your good fund of knowledge
    – Comments on your ability to get along with patients and coworkers
    – Comments on your “teachability”
Letters of Recommendation

• **Sample “good” LOR:**

Dear Program Director[M1],

I am pleased to recommend Karen Pomeroy as a candidate for medical residency. She completed her family medicine rotation with me in the spring of 2006 at Warren Hospital. In this capacity I was able to observe her on a few occasions.[M2]

Karen is an accomplished student, and is a very well-rounded individual. She is a graduate of Penn State University, and has completed research in the field of Alzheimer’s. At PCOM she is involved with the American Medical Student Association, the Student Osteopathic Medical Association, and the Sparkle Motion club[M3].

Clinically, Karen has a good fund of knowledge, and is above her peers in her ability to apply knowledge to clinical situations[M4]. In her short time here she rapidly improved on her ability to formulate a differential diagnosis and devise an appropriate plan of action for the patients she encountered[M5]. Karen is a great team player, and she was able to develop a rapport with even our most difficult patients[M6].

Karen is a caring and intelligent individual. I trust that she will develop into a highly competent and dedicated intern[M7], and as such I recommend with her without reservation.

Sincerely,
Dr. Lilian Thurman, D.O.
Chairman, Division of Internal Medicine at Warren Hospital

[M1]Addressed to “Program Director”.
[M2]Mentions that recommender was only able to observe applicant on a few occasions.
[M3]Recommendation based largely on resume information, not personal contact.
[M5]Comments on “teachability”: will this person be able to learn and develop as a resident?
[M6]Comments on person’s ability to get along with others.
[M7]Shows confidence about student developing into intern.
Letters of Recommendation

• What does a GREAT LOR look like? (~35% of LORs)
  (“Great” LORs make up about 35% of all LORs received)
  – Everything that a good LOR has, and more
  – Written by someone who has first-hand knowledge of your skills
  – Comments on your ability to form relationships with patients
  – Gives anecdotal evidence to support recommendation
  – Written by someone who has connections to a program you are interested in, and/or someone who has several academic titles
Letters of Recommendation

• **Sample “great” LOR:**

  Dear Program Director,

  It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend Joel Barish to you, as he is one of the best medical students that I have had rotate through my practice in years.

  Joel recently completed a one-month rotation with me in my clinic. During this time, he was under my direct supervision, and I was able to observe him closely and often. I find that my clinic is often an extremely demanding rotation for many medical students. Joel clearly demonstrated that he was up for the challenge. He worked hard to absorb as many skills as he could, and by the end of the rotation, was performing at the level of my best interns.

  Joel has a friendly, easygoing personality and a mild demeanor. He displayed exceptional maturity and possesses outstanding skill at quickly forging relationships with her patients and coworkers. His interpersonal relationships are so well-developed that there were several patients who requested to see “that new doctor” rather than me for their follow-ups.

  His clinical fund of knowledge is well above that of his peers, and his ability to make a differential diagnosis improved during his time here. I have no doubts that his skills will flourish during his residency years. Early on Joel made clear his interest in Internal Medicine, and I was greatly pleased to hear of these residency ambitions. His professional curiosity about the field and his ability to perform at such a high level only strengthens my confidence in giving him the highest recommendation.

  Sincerely,
  Dr. Howard Mierzwiak, D.O
  Chairman, Division of Internal Medicine
  Core Director, General Internal Medicine
  Rockville Centre College of Osteopathic Medicine

  • [M1] Addressed “Dear Program Director”.
  • [M2] Written by someone who has first hand knowledge of your skills.
  • [M3] Mentions that the recommendation is made based on his performance in a challenging situation.
  • [M4] Comments on your ability to form relationships with patients.
  • [M6] Comments on “teachability”.
  • [M7] Mentions interest in a specific residency path: not always applicable, if you can’t commit to one field.
  • [M8] Written by someone with academic titles.