REFERENCE LETTER SAMPLE
Below is a suggested format for reference letters. The bracketed words are suggested options to use when applicable to your particular letter.

SALUTATION:

Dear [NAME OF EMPLOYER:] or [TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:]

PARAGRAPH 1:

If written to a specific employer:
I am writing this reference letter at the request of [student] who is applying for the position of [job title] with your [firm, company, school, etc.]

If written to whom it may concern:
I am writing this reference letter at the request of [student]. S/he has asked me to write this general letter which s/he may show to any prospective employer who asks him/her for references.

This reference letter is provided at the written request of **[name of person]**, who has asked me to serve as a reference on **[his/her]** behalf. It is my understanding that [name] is being considered by your organization for the position of **[job title]**. Please be advised that the information contained in this letter is confidential and should be treated as such. The information should not be disclosed to anyone in your organization who would not be involved in the hiring decision regarding this individual. Additionally, the information should not be disclosed to anyone outside of your organization without the consent of the person in question.

PARAGRAPH 2:

I have known [student] for [length of time] in my capacity as a [your job title] at [your employer]. If Applicable: [student] worked for me as a [job title]. or [student] belonged to the [club or organization] for which I served as an advisor. or [student] took [number] courses from me, including [names]. [Student] earned grades of [list grades], respectively, in those courses. Based on [student's] grades, along with his/her [excellent, good, etc.] attendance and class participation, I'd rate [students] performance in my class as [rating].

PARAGRAPH 3:

[student] has a number of strengths to offer [an employer, a graduate program]. List qualities here, backing each one up with examples. Try to pick qualities that tie into the specific type of job student is seeking or requested on the grad school application. EXAMPLE: "[Student] often exhibited excellent leadership in my class, volunteering to lead groups and then organizing the group's project quickly and efficiently. This attribute would serve [student] well in the position of Assistant Manager with your company."

PARAGRAPH 4:

In conclusion, I would [highly] recommend [student]. If his/her performance in my class(es) is any indication of how she/he'd perform [on the job, in grad uate school, etc.], [student] will be a positive addition to your [firm, college, etc.].

If you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sincerely yours,

NAME
TITLE

A Few Tips on How to Write a Letter of Recommendation

First Paragraph -- Start out by specifying in what capacity and for how long you have know the person whom you are recommending. If the person is an employee or coworker, indicate the term of employment, the responsibilities of the position, and any significant projects undertaken by the individual. You may wish to include a sentence about the nature of your company and its activities. Here, you can also give a one-sentence summary or overview of your opinion of the recommended individual.

Second Paragraph -- In the next paragraph provide a more detailed evaluation of the person as an employee. Describe his or her performance on specific assignments and list any important accomplishments. What are the individual's strengths or shortcomings in the workplace? What was it like to interact with him or her?

Third Paragraph -- To sum things up you can make a more broad characterization of the individual and his or her demeanor. Overall, was the person responsible, polite, warm, disagreeable, lazy, spiteful? Finally, indicate the degree to which you recommend the individual for the position she or he is seeking: without reservation, strongly, with some reservation, or not at all.

Concentrate on several different aspects of the person. Specifically identify **his/her skills, attitudes, personal attributes, and growth, as well as his/her contributions to and performance within your organization**. Also, if you do make negative comments, back them up with facts.

Avoid bland words such as:
nice, good, fairly, reasonable, decent, satisfactory

Use powerful words such as:
articulate, effective, sophisticated, intelligent, observant, significant, expressive, creative, efficient, cooperative, imaginative, assertive, dependable, mature, innovative

1. The following list of attributes (compiled by the National Association of Colleges and Employers) is often listed by employers as tools on which to base eventual selection. So, these are excellent points to address:
    - **ability to communicate**
    - **intelligence**
    - **self-confidence**
    - **willingness to accept responsibility**
    - **initiative**
    - **leadership**
    - **energy level**
    - **imagination**
    - **flexibility**
    - **interpersonal skills**
    - **self-knowledge**
    - **ability to handle conflict**
    - **goal achievement**
    - **competitiveness**
    - **appropriate vocational skills**
    - **direction.**
2. A recent national publication (1991 ASCUS Annual) listed the following eight intangibles as important when evaluating teaching candidates:

    1. **empathy,**
    2. **native intelligence,**
    3. **a divergent, abstract thinking style,**
    4. **a high level of commitment,**
    5. **the ability to be a "self-starter,"**
    6. **a high energy level,**
    7. **the recognition that excellence is a journey, not a destination, and**
    8. **the potential ability to lead.**

2. **Other skills**
    1. communication skills (written and oral)
    2. willingness to take initiative
    3. level of motivation
    4. planning and organizational skills
    5. technical or professional knowledge or skills
    6. flexibility/adaptability
    7. interpersonal skills
    8. willingness to accept responsibility/leadership
    9. analytical/problem-solving ability
    10. group interaction and team-working skills

Real-Life Examples:

STRONG RECOMMENDATION
Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Mr. James Miller

To Whom It May Concern:

James worked under my supervision as an editorial assistant from September 10, 1997, until April 5, 1998. His responsibilities included conducting research and interviews, fact checking, and writing brief front-of-the-book pieces, in addition to some clerical duties. During the course of his employment, James proved himself to be an able employee, a hard worker, and a talented writer.

I was quite impressed by James' ability to complete all work assigned to him on time, if not before it was due. His research was always thorough and comprehensive, and his fact checking always accurate. We sometimes allow our editorial assistants to do some writing, but James' talents prompted us to assign him more pieces than the norm. His writing is clear, concise, and evocative.

Overall, James is a very conscientious and able employee. I certainly believe he has what it takes to make a wonderful editor someday, and I am sad to see him leave. I strongly recommend James for any mid-level editorial position in publishing.

Sincerely,

Edward P. Larkin
Executive Editor

RECOMMENDATION WITH RESERVATION

Letter of Recommendation for Lisa Johnson

August 27, 1998

To Whom It May Concern:

Lisa Johnson was employed by E-Center as a Web Developer from June 10, 1998, to August 22, 1998. Her responsibilities included converting Photoshop mock-ups to HTML, implementing CGI scripts, and creating interactive DHTML features. During her time with us, Lisa showed herself to be a less than ideal employee.

Although much of the work Lisa completed was satisfactory, most of her assignments were finished after stated deadlines. Many of her programs contained multiple errors. When her superiors offered her constructive criticism, she showed little desire to improve and demonstrated an overall resistance to any sort of critique of her work. Lisa's attitude in the workplace appears to be her major shortcoming.

Lisa may have the potential to become an excellent programmer, however, her reluctance to accept criticism prevents her from becoming such. I would hesitate to recommend Lisa for any job where she might be required to accept commentary on her performance or be expected to show signs of improvement. She does have the ability to complete basic programming projects.

Sincerely,

Eliza P. Walker
Executive Producer