

Tips for Writing a Strong Letter of Recommendation (LOR)

Students need LOR's for their residency applications and as clinical faculty, you'll likely be approached by students asking you to write these letters. Sometimes, you'll feel well-positioned to write a strong letter and sometimes you won't.

If you feel you *can't* write a strong LOR... You might feel that you did not work with the student long enough or did not have a positive experience with the student. If this is the case, just let the student know that you are not able to write a strong LOR.

If you feel you *can* write a strong LOR... Remember that the best LOR's convince the reader that what you say is based on real experience with the candidate. To get this across, we have tips for how to begin, fill in the details, and conclude the LOR.

The Beginning:

Begin with an introduction that includes:

- How long and in what capacity you have known the student
- Your current role as a clinical teacher
- Your qualifications for writing this letter – briefly describe your experience as a clinical teaching (e.g. how long and in what ways have you been a clinical teacher?)

The Details:

Outline details of your assessment of the student's abilities in the body of the letter

- State specific skills and attitudes the candidate possesses
- Provide descriptions with details to demonstrate how a candidate exhibited these skills and/or attitudes
- Avoid vague or generic descriptors (e.g. "great student" or "team player")
- Don't exaggerate
- Frame any weaknesses positively whenever possible (e.g., "demonstrated improvement in documentation..." rather than "demonstrated poor documentation")
- Include any hardships the candidate has had to overcome.

The Conclusion:

Conclude with your summary of the strength of your recommendation

- If accurate, include if you would accept this student in your residency (e.g. "If FIU had an orthopedic residency program, Ms. Ramirez would be an excellent fit in our program.")
- When possible and if accurate, include a comparison statement (e.g. "Ms. Jones is among the top 5% of students with whom I have worked," or 10%, 20%, etc.)

General Guidelines:

- Check your spelling and grammar.
- Write on letterhead, if you are able
- After your name, include an accurate signature line
 - Real signatures are preferred over digital signatures
 - Include any position titles, including faculty appointments, in your signature