

**TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION  
BY JIM HENSLEY, DIRECTOR OF DORRANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS**

#	TIPS	DONE!
1	Teachers' letters should generally come from those who teach an academic, core course, such as English, math, science, history, and/or foreign language.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Request to see a copy of the student's application and/or essay before you write your letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Request to see a copy of the student's resume before you write your letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Interview the student to learn more before you write.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Follow the directions given by the organization requesting a letter: i.e.: Letterhead, deadlines, online or US Mail, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Describe your qualifications for writing the letter: i.e.: I have been teaching American Literature for 24 years, and...	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Explain how you know the applicant.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Quantify assertions: i.e.: Compared with the students I have worked in the past 10 years, this student <b>ranks</b> in the top 5%.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Counselors' letters place the student in the school community and discusses the overall student: i.e.: Extracurricular activities, honors and awards, GPA, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Begin with something that the reader will remember about the student; start as strong as you can. Imagine reading 500 letters, all the same. Your challenge is to reveal the student to be as unique as his/her fingerprint (if you cannot do this, see the last bullet below).	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Don't make assertions about the attributes of a student without specific evidence; be concrete. Therefore, avoid platitudes and generalities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Teachers' letters discuss students' academic traits (cognitive) and academic behaviors (affective) in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Discuss potential, but be realistic (not everyone has the potential to be President or to dance on Broadway).	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Letters that focus on obstacles and hardships must also have a silver lining. What did the student learn from the difficulties encountered?	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Be honest: If you have a concern or have noted a weakness, state this.	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Ascertain if the student will actually complete their application before you submit your letter. (I get letters for students who do not submit applications.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Do not write a letter if you cannot do so sincerely and in glowing terms or if you do not know the student well or if you are not given enough time. Faint praise will not help the applicant.	<input type="checkbox"/>