

Jim says...

Weekly, I am asked to write reference letters for schools, jobs, scholarships. I usually like doing them, but some become difficult. Most times I do not have the information I need to do an excellent recommendation letter, in the time-frame requested. Many times enclosed school forms are not filled out completely by the student, or signed as instructed. I find myself, at 5:00am, looking up online the address for an admission's office or for the address of the requester, in order to fill out their portion of the recommendation. Also, I find myself having to put the recommendation aside until I get a signature. I'm not sure you want it sitting in the youth office for a week.

The request to write a recommendation needs to be in writing- not a comment in the hallway of church or a phone call- that says "I need a recommendation letter by next week- can I pick it up at CS?" One phrase I always remember--- "Not in writing--didn't happen."

Here's what I need to write good reference letters:

- 1. At least three weeks' notice.**
- 2. Who is the letter is about - your full name spelled out correctly- not nicknames or assumptions.**
- 3. Full contact information should be included - cell phone, address, school presently attending, parents' names.**
- 4. Which youth programs the person has attended - Cornerstone, Work Trips, Fusion Leadership-etc. - with basic dates and years. Yes, I know you went on the New Orleans or WV Missions Trip or helped at Fusion, or helped with The Gift, but give me the year(s) and any other specific, noteworthy contributions/service you may have provided.**
- 5. Who/Where the letter is to go to.**
- 6. Envelopes that are CORRECTLY addressed to the school's admissions office, etc., with postage stamps included.**
- 7. Any forms printed off with the upper portion filled out completely and SIGNED in the right spot. It's important to give me the right forms, not the teacher forms. Please double check.**
- 8. If not mailed, it is your responsibility to pick them up, do not ask the youth staff or office to deliver it to you at Cornerstone or wherever you may be.**
- 9. Please indicate if there are any special requests, like signing the back of the envelope or anything that may be missed.**

I want to give you my best!
Help me help you! And always, pray for God's will!

Jim Byrne