

Scholarship Reference Tips

WHO MAKES A GOOD REFERENCE:

A good reference (or letter of recommendation) can add a lot of value to your scholarship application. The best references come from people who have worked with you and can speak with knowledge about your character, activities, and experiences in high school, college or a work environment. This person should have known you for at least a year or more, and relatively recently (within the last two years). They should have had fairly regular contact with you so they can comment on aspects of your character, such as responsibility, integrity, work ethic, leadership skills, etc. Ideally, they would be able to give specific examples of your having demonstrated these skills and other qualities the scholarship committee might be looking for. Generally speaking, the more specific the person can be when providing your reference, the better.

ACCEPTABLE PEOPLE TO ASK TO BE A REFERENCE:

- teachers or professors (ALL ETCF scholarship applications require at least one teacher/professor reference that has had direct classroom experience with you)
- coaches or student club sponsors
- high school counselor or college advisor
- former or current employers
- church youth pastor or scout/troop leader

UNACCEPTABLE PEOPLE TO ASK TO BE A REFERENCE:

- family members
- friends
- teachers or employers that you did not have a good relationship with or you left on bad terms
- people who do not know you very well personally (a professor you have never spoken to)

HOW TO ASK SOMEONE TO BE A REFERENCE:

Ideally, you should ask someone to be a scholarship reference (or any type of reference for that matter) in person. Explain to them what the reference is for and why you are asking them to write it. It's OK to use flattery in making the ask, this person helped you to be successful in an aspect of your life but don't go overboard, just be polite.

Examples:

- TEACHER: "I enjoyed your class. I feel like you can not only speak to how I participated in class discussions but also on how my study habits improved throughout the year."
- EMPLOYER/CLUB SPONSOR/COACH: "I have enjoyed working/learning under you and think a recommendation from you would be a valuable asset to my scholarship application."

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO ASK SOMEONE TO BE A REFERENCE:

As soon as you start your application process, start thinking about who you will ask to be a reference. Be respectful of your potential references time and make the ask as soon as possible. You want to give them as much time as possible so they will be able to write a thoughtful recommendation on your behalf. You do not want them to feel rushed because you have waited until the last minute to start your scholarship application process.

All ETCF scholarships open on December 1st and have either a February 1st or March 1st deadline.

Your application and references must be completed by the deadline to be considered on-time. The ETCF scholarship application asks for 2 references (one of which must be from a teacher). The process is done online by submitting your reference's contact information (make sure it is accurate) and a link is then sent to the reference to be completed - you will not be able to see what the reference has submitted.

Once you have confirmation that they have time and would like to be a reference for you, submit the information through the application portal so the link will be sent directly to them. This will ensure they have enough time to complete the request before your application deadline. Follow up with your reference to make sure they received the link.

ETCF staff monitor the requests sent and will send reminders as needed to the applicant and the reference writer but it is ultimately up to the applicant to make sure that the references are received by the application deadline.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION YOUR REFERENCE WILL NEED:

- name of the scholarship - ETCF offers several scholarships but use a "common application" so you should only need to ask for 2 references that will be used for all of your submissions
- type of scholarship - college, university, vocational/technical school, etc.
- special scholarship requirements - GPA, college major, acceptance into a specific college, etc.
- copy of your resume or high school "brag sheet" - this should include not only your grades, club activity and any jobs you've had but also your goals and passions
- scholarship deadline

THINGS TO CONSIDER AFTER YOU HAVE REQUESTED A REFERENCE:

Once you've secured your 2 references and you know they have received the link from ETCF, it's time to wait. Give them a few days/weeks (depending on how much time you have until the deadline) to think about and look over the request. If you get to within a week of your deadline and they haven't submitted the request, then you might send them a friendly reminder.

After the reference has been submitted, remember to thank your reference for their time. This can be either verbally, an email or a hand written note.

It's also a nice touch to let them know if you receive the scholarship.



Questions? Contact Dana Durman (ddurman@etcf.org) or Kathryn Martinez (kmartinez@etcf.org)

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