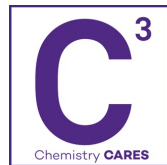


Avoiding Biases in Letters of Recommendations



- We all hold unconscious biases, and while we try to avoid it, those biases can enter our writing and be reflected in letters of recommendation.

Keep it Professional

Letters of rec for women and for POC are more likely to mention personal information, which is almost never relevant for the application.

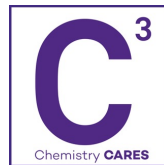
Avoid Stereotypes

Although positive traits, avoid using words like “compassionate” or “activist” because they can evoke gender and racial stereotypes that may hurt a candidate.

Adjectives to **avoid**:
caring, hard-working, dependable,
warm, helpful

Adjectives to **include**:
Accomplished, skilled,
knowledgeable, independent,
ambitious

Avoiding Biases in Letters of Recommendations



If you identify biases in a letter of recommendation:

- Use the letter with caution or reduce its significance in the evaluation.
- Follow up with the letter writer to gain more clarity on the details.
- Requesting additional references may be appropriate in some cases.

What are ways you can reduce biases when writing or reviewing letters of recommendation?

- 1) https://csw.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/avoiding_gender_bias_in_letter_of_reference_writing.pdf
- 2) https://www.montana.edu/lachowieclab/dei/ref_letter_racial_bias.html
- 3) <https://www.uvic.ca/equity/assets/docs/biasesfacultyletter.pdf>