



Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Physical Therapy School Applicant

*Adapted with permission from "Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Medical School Applicant," by the Association of American Medical Colleges
<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/letters/>*

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of evaluation for a physical therapy school applicant!

The following guidelines aim to improve the letter writing process in order to benefit both letter writers and admissions committees. They are organized into two sections that describe (1) tips about how to write a letter and (2) key areas of interest to physical therapy schools.

How to use the guidelines

Please note that use of these guidelines is *optional*. They are intended to help you think about your letter and facilitate the writing process.

Physical therapy schools do not expect any one letter writer to provide information about every characteristic of an applicant. In fact, they require multiple letters specifically because no one letter writer is expected to know everything about an applicant.

Guidelines

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for physical therapy school rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant:
 - How long you have known the applicant;
 - In what capacity you have interacted (e.g., faculty, pre-PT advisor, clinical observation supervisor, etc.); and
 - Whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observations.
3. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the clinic, lab, course, assignment, job, or institution.
4. **Only** include information on grades, GPA, or GRE scores **if** you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, GPA, and GRE scores are available within the application.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for physical therapy school. Consider describing:
 - The situation or context of the behavior
 - The actual behavior(s) you observed
 - Any consequences of that behavior



6. Admissions committees find comparison information helpful. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about:
- The comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.)
 - Your rationale for the final comparison

Key Areas of Interest

A. Unique Contributions to the Incoming Class

- Describe obstacles that the applicant had to overcome, and if applicable, how those obstacles led to new learning and growth
- Explain how the applicant may contribute to a physical therapy school's diversity, broadly defined (e.g., background, attributes, experiences, etc.)

Note: If you write about any information that could be considered potentially sensitive, confirm with the applicant that they are comfortable with the inclusion of that information.

B. Core, Entry-level Competencies

Describe how the applicant has, or has not, demonstrated **any** of the following competencies that are necessary for success in physical therapy school.

Interpersonal Competencies

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on their responsibilities to society; locally, nationally, and globally.

Social Skills: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

Cultural Competence: Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

Teamwork: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

Oral Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.



Intrapersonal Competencies

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

Resilience and Adaptability: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

Capacity for Improvement: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

Critical Thinking: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

Quantitative Reasoning: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.

Scientific Inquiry: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.

Written Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.

Science Competencies

Living Systems: Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.

Human Behavior: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.