

Asking for a Letter of Reference

Letters of reference are an important part of applying to schools, jobs, and in this case, a scholarship from the Henry David Thoreau Foundation. The people you ask to write letters recommending you—often referred to as “references”—are people who can speak highly of you, attesting to your academic achievements, your qualifications, and most of all—know you well. Below is a guide to asking for letters of reference for your Henry David Thoreau Foundation Scholarship application.

Who to Ask: Letters of Reference 1 & 2

Henry David Thoreau Scholarships are given to students who have a demonstrated interest in the environment. Of the three references we request, two must be from teachers. Applicants should consider asking teachers who know them well and who can attest to their academic achievement, including problem solving skills, leadership capacity, and an interest in studying an environmental field. Science teachers are good choices, but if you had an English or a debate teacher who used environmentally-themed books or topics, those teachers would also be good references.

Who to Ask: Letter of Reference 3

Your third letter of reference is an opportunity to have someone outside of the classroom offer a different perspective on you as a person, your interests, and the qualities that make you excel as a leader. For example, you can ask a coach, your guidance counselor, a manager at your job, or your volunteer supervisor to write your third letter of reference. You may also ask a third teacher to write a letter of reference for you. It could be a teacher who may supervise one of the school clubs you belong to, teaches a subject you enjoy, or teaches you outside of school, such as a dance, karate, or piano teacher.

Who Not to Ask for a Letter of Reference

Although your family members know and love you, relatives are not good choices for references. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are expected to say wonderful things about you. Friends, especially friends who are your age, are also not a good choice for a letter of reference. Although a friend or a relative’s glowing recommendation is likely true, reviewers want to hear from people who can attest to how well you fulfill your responsibilities and who know you as a student, a team member, an employee, a volunteer or as an active citizen.

When to Ask for a Letter of Reference

People are busy with their jobs and families, so you need to be respectful of their time. Ask your teachers and your third reference if they are willing and able to write a letter of reference for an environmental scholarship. Be sure to explain what the letter is needed for and why you are applying. You can send your teachers and third reference a link to the Henry David Thoreau Foundation’s website so they can tailor their letters to spotlight your interest in the environment. You might also supply them with a resume/activities list so they have as much current information about you as possible. Give your references plenty of time. It is best to give people at least 4 to 8 weeks to provide a letter of reference. After you have sent the request for a letter of reference through the Henry David Thoreau Foundation’s online application, check with your references to make sure they received the email. If your references are having technical issues

with the online application portal, they are welcome to email jackie@thoreauscholar.org or call the office at 617-666-6900.

Points to Keep in Mind

After you have sent the request for a letter of reference through the Henry David Thoreau Foundation's application, your reference will need to upload their letter to your application. You will not be able to read the letter, but you will be able to tell when it is uploaded.

School firewalls sometimes prevent reference requests from going through. If your teachers or third reference did not receive your email request, ask them to check their spam, junk mail, and trash folders. Contact your school's administration staff and ask that they allow emails from administrator@grantinterface.com to get through their system. School staff are welcome to contact the Henry David Thoreau Foundation at jackie@thoreauscholar.org or 617-666-6900 to verify the site.

The Henry David Thoreau Foundation's scholarship application opens on October 15th and it closes on February 1st. Once the application closes on February 1st, nothing can be added, so you want to have your letters of reference added sooner rather than later in case there is an issue. Applications without all three references attached are deemed incomplete and will not be considered for a scholarship.

Say Thank You

Finally, writing a great letter of reference is hard work. Be sure to thank your references for taking the time to write on your behalf. Not only is it appropriate to show your appreciation for the person who made the effort to write your letter, but you also may need to ask for another reference from them in the future! If you are awarded the scholarship, be sure to let your references know and thank them for helping you succeed.

Other Helpful Resources

<https://collegesofdistinction.com/advice/letter-of-recommendation-for-college-admissions>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/your-high-school-record/how-to-get-a-great-letter-of-recommendation>

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_basic_rules.html