

Avoiding Gender Bias in Recommendation Letters

01

We are all biased

Gender bias is common in both men and women. Everyone writing recommendation letters should be aware of this bias and knowingly avoid it.

02

Emphasize accomplishments, not effort

Letter for women are 50% more likely to describe effort instead of accomplishments. Avoid adjectives like "hard-working", "dedicated", "diligent", and focus on achievements like "her research", "her career", "her skills".

03

Mention research, publications and relevant outputs

Letters for men are four times more likely to mention these critical accomplishments. Make sure to include them in every letter.

04

Write more and stronger

On average, letters for men are longer and are more likely to include strong assurance statements. Include strong assertions like "she is best for the position" instead of minimal ones like "she can do the job".

05

Personal life is usually irrelevant

Recommendation letters for women include more mentioning of personal matters, which is almost always irrelevant. Keep the content and the format professional, make sure to use formal titles and surnames - "Dr. Levi" and not "Dana".

06

Avoid the "caring" stereotype

Letters for women include more adjectives like "compassionate", "caring", "helpful" and "warm". These traits are usually associated stereotypically with women and can hurt a professional letter for a candidate.

07

Be careful when raising doubt

Letters for women contain two times more remarks that raise doubt, like "challenging personality" and "I am confident she will improve". Avoid irrelevant comments and make sure that you raise doubt only when necessary.

CORRECT Bank words:

Successful, excellent, accomplished, knowledgeable, insightful, resourceful, confident, ambitious, independent, intellectual.