



## Guidance notes for writing a letter of support

When a member of Girlguiding is nominated for a Regional or National award, the awards committees rely on the applications and the accompanying letters of support to tell them everything they need to know about the person being nominated, and what makes them really special.

If you have been asked to write a letter of support for an award application for someone it may feel a bit daunting. Here are a few hints and tips, and examples of what makes a really good letter.

1. All award applications should be made secretly, so please don't discuss the request with the nominee or any members of her family.
2. It is important to remember that an award is made for what people do **over and above** what the thousands of volunteers in guiding do week in, week out, so the letter really has to show how the nominee is special.
3. If you have been asked to describe a specific area of work, make sure this is the main focus of your letter and be as specific as possible.
4. You should also include:
  - how you know this person and how long you have known her
  - in the roles you knew her in, how was she outstanding? Can you tell us about the impact of her work - giving specific examples?
  - what is it about her personality or character which has made her guiding stand out above others?
  - Any other aspects of the nominee's life which are relevant to this award.
5. Your letter doesn't need to be long. Half a page may be enough and more than two pages will probably be too much. Keep it brief and if necessary use bullet points or headings to make your points clear.
6. You don't need to list everything the nominee has ever done in guiding - a Girlguiding history report will be attached.
7. When you are writing your letter think about how much you can make someone understand about the person and how well they will feel they know her after reading it.
8. Include words and sentences about **how** the nominee approaches her guiding, not just what she has done. Describe the **impact** of work she has done. Talk about how she has enabled others to develop and stretch themselves. Be **specific** about what she has achieved. Has she made you **think differently** about something within guiding? Has she **encouraged** people to **behave** differently?

9. Finally, if you don't feel comfortable putting words on paper yourself, why not ask the person who approached you for the letter to interview you about the nominee, and make some notes which you can then sign?

Here are some examples of paragraphs from very good letters of support, with notes to explain what is good about them and particularly strong sentences highlighted.

Sarah and I joined the Activity Committee together in 2009, in different roles but ones where we shared experiences and worked together. I was immediately struck by Sarah's enthusiasm for guiding and positive attitude. Sarah would challenge others with careful thought and consideration whilst adding her wholehearted support and energy for decisions she considered were the right direction for the Division/District.

*This focuses on not just what Sarah has done, but how she has done it.*

In her role as Chair of Events, Sarah ensured that the young members had a wide range of exciting opportunities to celebrate the centenary. Her exceptional skills as a leader, her knowledge and in depth understanding of the development of girls and young women together with her comprehensive experience of guiding as a trainer has enabled her to always put the girl first, which in turn has ensured the success and popularity of initiatives and adventures under her guidance an organisation.

*This quickly sums up the experience and knowledge she has. It shows that she puts girls first.*

Sarah's organisational skills are outstanding; she is 100% reliable and has the ability to both build a team and lead it, but also to assume the team role when appropriate, nurturing other volunteers to gain skills and experience to further their own development through her gentle and patient encouragement.

*This shows her flexibility.*

Her appointment to XXXX was supported unanimously by the whole team 18 months ago. Although new to the role, she has taken it on with typical enthusiasm. Her calm and competent manner has helped her build and nurture her team, encouraging others to take on new roles and responsibilities and so grow personally. She has resolved difficult situations with authority and by listening to advise so reaching satisfactory outcomes. It was a delight to me to welcome Sarah to the team knowing the skills, wisdom and sense of humour that she would bring and willingly share.

*This paragraph shows how she is viewed by others and expands on the first paragraph by describing what personal qualities she brings to her guiding.*

Her greatest enjoyment comes from enabling the guides to grow and develop as responsible, well balanced, enthusiastic members of society. She opens avenues for them all which lead to adventure and opportunities never dreamed about. Dolly Parkin, in a letter to me but not included in this application, spoke of Sarah's many achievements including initiating a new unit plan which is providing high quality, girl-led guiding.

*This give some further specific examples of what she has done.*

I was made to feel so much part of the local team by Sarah that I made the commitment to continue to help throughout my 3 years at university.

*This shows how her behaviour has encouraged and supported others.*

...she built a strong team which sought to develop and foster guiding's involvement in the community which has left a lasting legacy in the programme today...imagination, vision and drive are characteristics that she has in abundance. Couple those with leadership and a lifelong commitment to guiding and you have someone who is not only a great ambassador for guiding but who when asked to do something that others would shy away from, delivers in abundance.

*This shows how her guiding goes beyond local guiding and how she has left a legacy.*