

Character Reference

Aim:	Learners write a positive description of a friend to a potential employer.
Topic:	Applying for a new job
Writing Sub-skill:	Phrasing things positively
Language Focus:	Describing character
Materials:	Sample character reference letter Character profiles
Pre-Task Time:	25 mins
Post-Task Time:	15 mins
Concept:	Being tactful is a useful skill (as, it could be argued, is bare-faced lying) and this task aims to develop learners' abilities to phrase negative things in a positive way. Before writing their own reference, learners look at an example and discuss how it manages to recommend a fairly unlikeable character convincingly.

Pre-Task Procedure:

- 1 Ask learners if they have ever had to write/request a character reference about/from a friend. Was it easy to write? If not, elicit when a character reference might be requested and whether learners would ask for character references for new staff if they were an employer.
- 2 Give out the example character reference letter. Learners should read it and think about what question each paragraph answers. In feedback, tell learners to write the following questions next to the appropriate paragraph: How do you know the person? What do you know about them personally? Why do you recommend this person?
- 3 Hand out the mini character profiles and ask pairs to decide for which character the reference has been written (Audrey Edwards). Learners will probably notice the discrepancy between the glowing reference and the more negative language of the profile. If not, elicit this and ask learners to underline the phrases in the letter which have couched Audrey's negative qualities in a positive light.
- 4 Pairs look at the other characters and think of how they could phrase their negative traits more positively. Feedback and help learners develop their ideas. Encourage learners to make notes at this stage.

Task Procedure:

- 1 Learners write a character reference letter for one of the characters. They should follow the structure from the example letter. Remind learners to make the reference wholly positive.

Post-Task Procedure:

- 1 Learners read each other's references and match them to the character profiles.
- 2 Collect in the character references and mark them according to the **Task Specific Mark Scheme**. Write in - where you think learners have been too negative. Tick every good character adjective or description where learners have managed to make a negative into a positive.
- 3 Encourage learners to rewrite their character references to learn from their mistakes and remind them to be as positive as possible.
- 4 Re-mark second drafts quickly, praising improvements wherever possible.
- 5 Record final marks for the task in the learners' **Writing Portfolios**.

Character Reference

5 Pinocchio Terrace
London
EC1 4TW

1st April 2009

To whom it may concern,

I have known for many years, both as a colleague here at The Cake Factory and as a friend. S/he is also godmother/father to my young son.

..... approaches life in a very positive manner and s/he finds enjoyment in everything s/he does. S/he works hard and is very aware of his/her priorities. S/he also takes a real interest in people and is always willing to listen in difficult times.

I would recommend for any position s/he may wish to pursue. His/her youthful energy and enthusiasm would be an asset to any company.

Yours faithfully,

Billy Liar

Character Reference

Michael Richards

- Can seem quite arrogant
- Can't sit still for two minutes
- Never stops talking
- Has a very loud laugh



Jennifer Peters

- Is really indecisive
- Is the shiest person in the world
- Never arrives on time
- Is very secretive



Audrey Edwards

- Can be very immature
- Is always laughing
- Loves gossiping
- Tends to be selfish



Jonathan Stephens

- Has zero sense of humour
- Can be very rude
- Dominates all conversations
- Has unpredictable moods



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Task Specific Mark Scheme

CONTENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What info needs to be included? 2. What functions does the task need to fulfill? 	<p><i>details on relationship to person and the person's character</i></p> <p><i>provide a positive character reference that encourages the employer to take the person on</i></p>
RANGE & ACCURACY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of language should be used? 2. What vocabulary should be expected? 	<p><i>present perfect, present simple</i></p> <p><i>positive character adjectives, relationships, jobs</i></p>
ORGANISATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the ideas clearly and logically organised? 2. Are the paragraphs appropriate? 3. Evidence of linking within each paragraph? 4. Evidence of linking between paragraphs? 	<p><i>each phrase deals with a different aspect of character</i></p> <p><i>paragraphs are short</i></p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
APPROPRIACY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What register should the task be? 2. What format does the task demand? 3. What tone does the task require? 	<p><i>formal</i></p> <p><i>letter (see sample for structure)</i></p> <p><i>convincing</i></p>
TARGET READER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are they engaged? 2. Are they informed? 3. Are they taken into account by the author? 	<p><i>complete information is provided</i></p> <p><i>relevant information is provided</i></p> <p><i>reader would consider employing subject of the letter</i></p>