



Women's Flat Track Derby Association: Letters of reference

So, you've decided to apply for admission to WFTDA. Congratulations on taking this step towards becoming part of the nation's premier roller derby association. As you know, your application must be accompanied by three letters of reference from existing WFTDA leagues. These letters are an important part of the application process, as they give us another perspective to help us evaluate your league and its potential place within WFTDA. Think of them like the letters of recommendation you would submit with a college application, or the feedback that a business associate might supply to a potential new employer on your behalf. Here are a few pointers on how to secure the best possible references for your league.

Who letters should come from

First, keep in mind that at least one of the letters must come from a league in your geographic area. The other two letters may come from any WFTDA league—though if you have several in your area and have gotten to know them, that is ideal.

- For leagues in more derby-saturated areas like the northeast, this should be a piece of cake, since so many leagues are within a few hours drive. If you're truly dedicated to the sport of women's flat track derby, chances are you've already traveled to see your sister league(s) bout and have begun establishing a relationship with them. If not, take some time to do this and you'll not only receive a positive reference, but also enjoy support from the experienced league, friendly competition and a nearby ally in the derby world.
- If your league is not within a reasonable driving distance of the next closest league, work on building a relationship through other channels, such as email and telephone. Even if skaters from the other league can't be there in person to meet with your skaters, sincere, ongoing communication will give them a good picture of your league.

Checklist

Below is a checklist of questions to help you determine if a league is a suitable choice to write you a letter of reference:

- Have members of your league attended one or more of their practices (either as participants or observers), and interacted with their skaters?
- Have you attended one or more of their scrimmages or bouts, and spent time talking to skaters from the league so that they know who you are?
- Have members of this league attended one or more of your practices, scrimmages or bouts? Have they assisted with coaching your league?
- Have you met with officers, coaches or other representatives from the league? If so, were your interactions substantial enough that they can vouch for your league's situation/goals/progress?
- Have you maintained phone or online communications with members of the league?
- Do your league members actively seek advice or assistance from this league?

(Note: You don't need to answer "yes" to all of these questions to request a letter from the league—but if you can't answer "yes" at least a few of them, this is probably not the right league to approach for a reference.)

Who not to ask

Finally, here are some examples of who you should NOT ask for references:

- The MySpace friend with whom you've never had an in-depth conversation.
- The random girl you got drunk with one night at the bar at RollerCon.
- Anyone who doesn't really know your league.

You wouldn't ask a complete stranger for a recommendation for a job or school, because they simply don't know you and can't paint an accurate picture of who you are, and why you are perfect for the position. Instead, choose someone who can truthfully say that your league is WFTDA material through and through based on first-hand knowledge. The letter writer will be reporting to WFTDA's membership committee about everything from your league structure to your practice methods, and most importantly, your enthusiasm and commitment—so make sure you choose someone who knows your best qualities and can put them in the spotlight.

Good luck!

