Letters of recommendation are widely used in the selection process of individuals applying in schools, degree programs or for a job. Despite this widespread use, research shows that letters or recommendation (LORs) may be unreliable, and at best only mildly accurate in selecting the deserving candidate for a job or a school placement.

Academic professionals reportedly use LORs more than applied professionals. Those who use them however, report placing only less than 25% of the selection process on information contained in LORs, with academic professionals reporting placing more emphasis on LORs as compared to applied professionals.

Professionals also agree that LORs tend to be inflated or exaggerated. However, LORs coming from a prestigious organization or university or from someone whom the reader personally knows tend to be given more weight. A number of writers of recommendation letters have also admitted writing LORs for individuals who did not deserve them.

Professionals also disagree on the effectivity of LORs in discriminating between a deserving applicant and a less deserving one. Its importance in selecting between applicants is also widely disputed