

FAKE EXAMPLE REFERENCE LETTER FOR EVA CHAN
SOUTH HARMON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, CLASS OF 2027

EVAN CHEN

Editor note: in this fake reference letter, all names, scores, years, etc. are fictional and are not intended to correspond to any actual students, past or present. The figures are Evan's work.

I am writing to recommend Eva Chan for the **2027 class** of the **South Harmon Institute of Technology**. I coached Eva in my olympiad training program, named OTIS, during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year, and worked less directly with her at the Math Olympiad Program (MOP¹), where I was the assistant academic director that summer.

Let me briefly brag about OTIS² for context. It's an international training program for students hoping to represent their country at the **International Math Olympiad** (IMO). Since IMO competition is so fierce, the OTIS student population is quite elite: *everyone* is "best student from their school". (They also seem to love MIT: among my roughly 50 students who graduated from the US last spring, about half joined MIT's class of 2026.)

Mathematically, Eva is a strong student with ability similar to a median MOP qualifier. For comparison against other current South Harmon students, I think her ability level is similar to Ellen Chin ('20) and Edward Chung ('22), who I also worked with while they were in high school. To match this, Eva has her fair share of contest accolades, like earning a silver medal at the 2022 USA Math Olympiad with 30th place.

In particular, Eva's absolutely comfortable with proof-based mathematics, more so than many graduating math majors in the United States. I am familiar with the math department

at South Harmon, and can readily say that she's fully prepared for it — if she chooses to major in mathematics, she's likely to take an upper-division course like Math 201 for freshman year (in which case she will be near the top of the class) and continue from there.

Her work ethic is strong even compared to other OTIS students, and Eva was one of my most productive students (top 15% by any reasonable metric) during 2021-2022. Her writing quality is above average among students I work with — it's not quite as polished as, say, Edward was a few

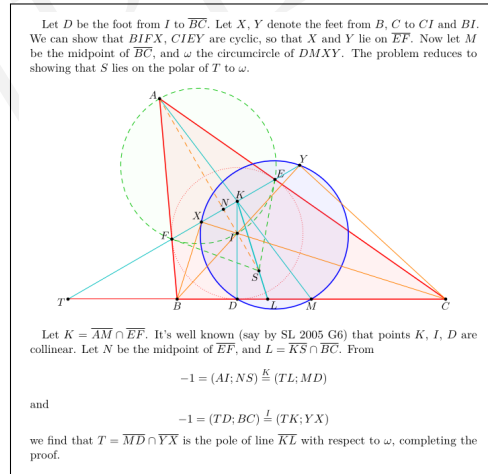


FIGURE 1. Example write-up from Eva.

Date: October 2022.

¹If you are not familiar, MOP is the national training camp for the United States team at the International Math Olympiad. I think more than half of MOP students attend MIT recently, so MOP has close cultural ties to MIT now.

²Website: <https://web.evanchen.cc/otis.html>. OTIS admissions is need-blind and meets full demonstrated need.

years back, but it still reads clearly and is always typeset neatly. You can see an example of her work for me in Figure 1.

In her interaction with other students, Eva’s personality is on the shy side (in particular, she is not the kind of person to dominate discussion), but she is certainly not reclusive either. When Eva does speak up, she actually has quite a sense of humor (see Figure 2 for an example), and she gets along well with her peers. I have no concern that she will fit in with the other students at South Harmon, and add a lot of color to the student group there.

Finally, I’d like to mention that over the last two years, she has become quite a proficient self-taught programmer, and often submits bug fixes and UI improvements for the OTIS web server (see Figure 3). This technological aptitude is not uncommon among students I work with in OTIS, to be clear; OTIS has quite its fair share of computing olympiad contestants, many who boast years more of experience. But I think her ability to learn this entirely herself without much (any) external guidance from me, and her willingness to take initiative, speaks a lot to Eva’s independence both as a learner and as a leader. (I’m a real sucker for students with a do-it-yourself attitude.)

I have no negative impressions or red flags to report. With these comments, I am happy to recommend Eva for the 2027 class, without hesitation or reservation.

As always, you are welcome to contact me with any questions.

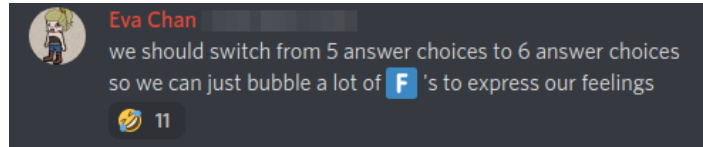


FIGURE 2. Hanging out.

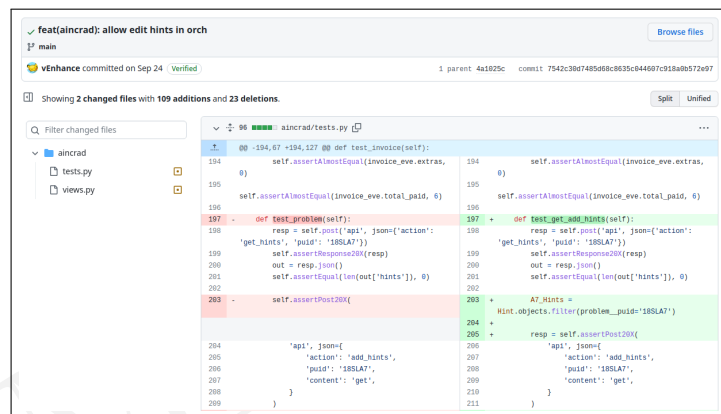


FIGURE 3. Pull request.

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