“I’d like to nominate my colleague for an award, but I’m not sure what to say.” That’s a common sentiment expressed by nurses who have the desire to recognize a peer, but fall short of submitting the nomination materials. But crafting an award nomination doesn’t need to be difficult. With a bit of careful planning, you can prepare an award-worthy nomination, too.

Start with these seven tips that can help you prepare and submit a strong nomination.

1. **Review the award eligibility criteria.** Be sure your candidate meets the eligibility criteria. Your colleague may be impressive, but must meet the eligibility criteria to be considered for the award.

2. **Identify the information requested.** For example, if the award nomination form asks for a description of the candidate’s accomplishments in specific areas or roles, be sure to focus on those areas. It’s ok to address additional points if space permits, but be sure to specifically address the award criteria.

3. **Be specific.** If the instructions are to “describe” use concrete examples to illustrate your point. If you say the candidate is a great leader, provide brief examples of leadership skills as they relate to the award criteria.

4. **Follow the instructions.** If an award nomination asks for two letters of recommendation, provide two letters. Not one, not three. If it asks for less than 250 words, don’t write 1000. If documentation is requested, provide it. Otherwise, avoid lengthy attachments that aren’t requested in the instructions.

5. **Check spelling and grammar.** You want your nominee to shine in the best possible light.

6. **Reconsider the surprise.** It may seem like a nice idea to nominate a colleague for an award without letting the individual know beforehand. But, it’s usually better to let the nominee know before you submit. The nominee can review the information for accuracy, and correct any misinformation.

7. **Submit on time.** Note the nomination deadline date and submit all requested materials by that date. Generally, deadlines that fall on a weekend or holiday will be honored the following business day, so don’t panic if you need an extra 24 or 48 hours.