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HOW TO REQUEST A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

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- **Who to ask**
- **When to ask**
- **Materials needed**
- **Resources available**



LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- A well written recommendation letter provides admissions committees with information that isn't found elsewhere in the application.
- A recommendation letter is a detailed discussion, from a faculty member, of the personal qualities, accomplishments, and experiences that make you unique and perfect for the programs to which you've applied.
- Most graduate programs usually ask for 2-3 letters
 - 2 from professors
 - 1 employer-ideally & depending on program



WHO TO ASK

- **Professors**
 - From whom you have taken multiple classes
 - Have completed substantial projects
 - Have researched for
 - Have received very positive evaluations
 - Professors provide insight into your academic competencies and aptitude
 - personality characteristics that may contribute to your potential to succeed in graduate school
- **Employers**
 - Letters from employers are useful if you are working in a field that is related to that which you intend to study.



WHO TO ASK CONT'D

THE CRITERIA

- Knows your work
- Can describe your work positively
- Be able to favorably compare you with your peers
- Be able to write a positive letter
- Is able to evaluate your academic performance, discuss personal characteristics and capacity to work with others
- Can discuss skills and evaluate your level of professionalism
- Someone with an advanced degree who has supervised you in a job or internship aligned with the graduate program you are pursuing and/or has earned the degree which you are seeking.
- Knows where you are applying
- Knows your educational and career goals



WHO TO ASK CONT'D

- Take the time and make the effort to consider all of the possibilities:
 - Each professor you have had
All individuals you have come in contact with; employers, internship supervisors, supervisors from volunteer settings
- Don't rule out anyone, at first
- Make a long list of possible recommenders

After you have created an exhausted list, rule out those who you know will not give you a positive recommendation

- Then, set up an appointment to discuss your request.
- Be prepared to articulate your interest and reasons for attending graduate school

WHEN TO ASK



- **Faculty are especially busy during the months of November and December or towards the end of each term.**
- **Be considerate of your letter writers' time and approach them two months before you need the letter.**
- **Ask AT LEAST 6-8 weeks before you need them**
 - **Send friendly reminders 1-2 weeks before you need them**



HOW TO OBTAIN A POSITIVE LETTER

- Make an effort to get to know your professors and/supervisors
 - Speak up in class
 - Select courses with small class sizes
 - Take more than one class from a professor
 - Do research for a professor
 - Take on optional projects
 - Regularly attend office hours
- Provide your letter writer with ample information about you



Requesting the Letter

- Thank the professor for their time
- Provide information on how to get in touch with you in case they need to reach you
- What you would like emphasized in each letter
- A lists of schools/programs you are applying, due dates,
 - Earliest due date at the top
- Highlighting salient details of your academic life
 - Which of my courses did you take, and when?
 - What grades did you receive in each class?
 - What is your overall GPA?
 - What is your GPA in your major field?
 - Did you take a minor, and if so, how will it enhance your graduate studies?
- **AMPLE** information about yourself if writer doesn't know you well



- Unofficial transcripts
- Evaluations
- Copy of your best work in the course (with instructor comments on it), lab evaluations, projects, etc.
- Copy of your resume
- Copy of Statement of Purpose or Personal Essay
- Stamped and addressed envelopes
- Professional Goals



MATERIALS CONT'D

Organizing Your Applications

Prepare a well-organized series of files, one for each graduate school where you will be applying with:

Recommendation forms from each school

To make it easy for your letter writer to complete forms in a timely manner, complete the following

Applicant information typed in

Recommenders name, title, contact information

For each file dedicated to one of the schools where you're applying, make it clear how that graduate program differs from the others.

More and more schools are requesting online recommendations.

Give the proper URL to your recommender

Know where & how to submit the letter (cite individual names, titles, if you can), and what the deadline is (provide a soft deadline)



- Try to arrange it so that the letters compliment rather than merely echo one another.
 - Have one professor write about the quality of your research and term papers, and perhaps have him mention any study abroad experiences
 - Have another address your oral communication skills, leadership abilities, moral character and personality
 - Have a former internship supervisor talk about your work habits, the nature of your internship, your motivation, and what you contributed to the company or organization where you interned
 - You can have a bulleted list of the specific things you'd like a particular letter-writer to address, and add a request: "If you can, please discuss these topics in your letter."
- Make sure your references fully understand your career goals and aim your letter writers towards that.

SOME TIPS CONT'D



- **Include a stamped self-addressed postcard with this message**
- **"Please mail this card to me when you receive this letter" and ask the professor to drop it in with the sealed application**
- **That way, you can track the letter, and you need to do that until you know that all your letters have landed in the right hands.**
- **Keep copies of admissions materials for your records**



- Arrange an Appointment, explaining that you wish to discuss your plans to apply to graduate school.
 - This gives professor a heads up and a chance to think about whether they can write a helpful letter on your behalf.
- Prepare
 - To discuss the type of degree you seek
 - Programs to which you applying
 - How you arrived at your choice
 - Goals for graduate study and future aspirations
 - Why you believe the faculty member is a good candidate to write a letter of your behalf
- Give the faculty enough time to write a glowing letter.
- Send friendly reminders around 1 or 2 weeks before letter is needed.
- Give the professor what they need to write the letter



- Be neat
- Place all documentation in a folder and neatly label each item
- Clip each recommendation form to supporting documentation, relevant admissions essays, and a stamped envelope
- Use sticky note to mark the deadline on each
- Ask for input on your choices and overall advice.
- Pay attention to signals that faculty member does not want to write a letter on your behalf.



- Don't make the faculty rush as it will result in an average or even mediocre letter
 - Send maybe one or two friendly reminders a week or two before the deadline is helpful, but don't rush the professor or offer multiple reminders
- Don't fail to read a faculty member's response to your request.
 - After you ask a faculty member, carefully interpret his or her response.
 - Often faculty provide subtle cues that indicate how supportive a letter they will write.
- Don't push for a positive response.
 - Sometimes a faculty member will decline your request for a letter of recommendation.
 - He or she is doing a favor because the resulting letter would not help your application and may even harm it.



Don't wait until the last minute to ask for a letter

- Faculty are very busy with teaching, work, and research.
- They advise students and likely are writing many letters for other students..

Don't have bad timing.

- Approach a faculty member when they have the time to discuss it with you and consider it without time pressure.
- Don't ask immediately before or after class.

INSTEAD

- Visit the professor's office hours
- Don't provide messy, unorganized documents.
 - Anything you provide the professor must be free of errors and must be neat



Don't provide incomplete supporting documentation

- Don't make a professor have to ask you for basic documentation (transcripts, resume etc.)

Don't forget to write a thank you note or card afterward

- Your professor took the time to write for you, the least you can do is thank them
- Maybe even provide a small gift of appreciation

Don't forget to tell faculty about the status of your application



You want the most updated letter of recommendation

Ask if they can write a generic letter and if they are willing to keep a copy or willing to give you a copy (usb drive)

Ask your professor if they are willing to update their letter

Give the professor ample information about you when you ask them to update the letter

Keep any work you've done for a class/project



**HOW TO REQUEST A
LETTER OF
RECOMMENDATION
IN A VIRTUAL
ENVIRONMENT**

- Make a list of faculty that you have a relationship with to determine who is a good fit as a recommender for you
- Write out what you want them to include in your letter
- Set up a virtual meeting to discuss your graduate school applications
 - Ask directly if they can write a letter for you
 - If a virtual meeting is not possible ask via e-mail

Letter of recommendation request sample

Here is a sample recommendation letter request that you might submit to a teacher, coworker or friend.

Dear [Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.] Chambers,

I hope you are well! I am in the process of submitting an application to [institution or company name]. Part of application requires a letter of recommendation from someone who can effectively elaborate on my work habits and achievements. Based on our years of experience together, I believe you can help provide an effective, h detailed letter on my behalf.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could write a letter of recommendation for me that can help emphasize the work habits I've shown since we've known each other. The deadline for submitting the letter is [date]. If this d too soon and you are unable to provide a letter by that time, please let me know as soon as possible. Additio, is any information I can provide that will help you write the letter in more detail, I would be happy to submit it t

Thank you for your time and efforts on my behalf.

Sincerely,

Simon Brown

SAMPLE REQUESTS



Source: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/asking-for-a-letter-of-recommendation>

Requesting Recommendation Letters

Asking Via E-mail

Dear Dr. X,
Hope all is well with you. {Your course/working in your lab} was one of my favorite experiences throughout my collegiate career. I am delighted to announce that I am currently applying to Graduate Programs in [Subject]. In preparation for my applications, I wanted to ask you if you would consider writing a letter of recommendation for me. I would be happy to meet to discuss further if needed. I greatly appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Name]

Source: [GradLifeGrind](#)



Sample Request for Letter of Recommendation

Dear (Professor, Dr., Mr., or Ms.) Higgins,

As part of the prerequisites for acceptance to (graduate school, the IUP honors track, etc.), I have been asked to provide a letter of recommendation. Would you be so kind as to write such a letter, with particular comments in regard to our past association in (the honors program, an internship, coursework, conference, etc.)?

The deadline for submitting the letter is (date), and if you are unable to provide a letter, please let me know by (one week from the date of this letter).

Thank you in advance for your time.

Regards,

Eliza Doolittle

RESOURCES

Additional Questions?

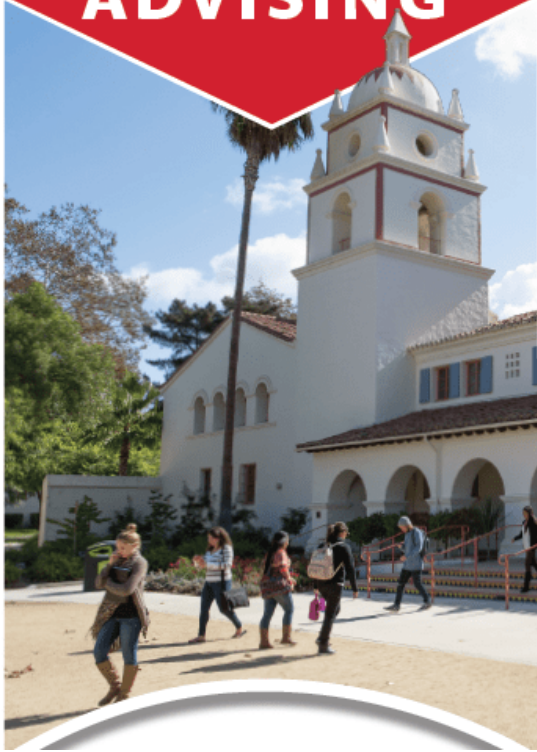
- Visit the Graduate Studies Center and Career Center websites

www.csuci.edu/gsc

www.csuci.edu/careerdevelopment/services/graduateschool

- Make an appointment with the Graduate School Specialist for more information on graduate school.
- Meet with your professors

ACADEMIC ADVISING



Center Hours & Contact Information:

Phone: (805) 437-8571

e-mail: advisement@csuci.edu

www.csuci.edu/gsc





REFERENCES

Lane, C. (2016). *How to request a letter of recommendation* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from

<http://slideplayer.com/slide/4585648/>

**REQUESTING
LETTERS DURING
THE TIME OF
COVID
ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES**

<https://www.scoreatthetop.com/blog/recommendation-letters-in-the-era-of-covid-19>

<https://www.saraharberson.com/blog/ask-teachers-recommendation-letters-quarantine>

<https://www.collegetransitions.com/blog/advice-for-college-recommendation-letters>

<https://www.socialwork.career/2014/06/the-abcs-of-getting-strong-letter-of.html>

