

Requesting Recommendations

Letters of recommendation are an important part of any application. While your transcript can tell the selection committee some things about your performance in class, your recommenders will be able to put a human element into your application by describing your personal and mathematical strengths and weaknesses and will be able to compare your abilities to the abilities of all the other students whom they have taught. For many people reading applications, letters of recommendation are more important than your grade point average. Ask professors who know you well academically; ask them in person. Share the following information with your recommenders.

- Phone number, email, or address in case your professor wants to contact you.
- Short- and long-term career goals.
- Relevant coursework: include term, grade, instructor, and any special contributions such as independent projects or class presentations.
- Honors, awards, or scholarships.
- Relevant work experience and extracurricular activities; interpret "relevant" in a broad sense: include work or activities which illustrate your scholarly potential, leadership, energy, motivation, and dedication to your field.
- Independent Studies or Independent Research: include the term, instructor, intent, and results
- Presentations, publications, or other evidence of your ability to communicate
- Professional meetings/ conferences that you have attended.
- Your specialized interests.

Provide your recommenders with the forms that they need in an organized manner.

1. Summary Sheet: On one piece of paper, write a list of all positions for which you are applying, complete with URLs or addresses and deadlines (indicating whether they are postmark or receipt deadlines).
2. Forms: Fill out all the information on any forms that you can, such as name of applicant and recommender. Make sure you sign if you are supposed to.
3. Personal Statement (if a part of your applications)
4. Resume (if a part of your applications)
5. Anything else your recommender requests!

Finally, place copies of your application materials, the list of deadlines, and the forms in manila envelopes or folders emblazoned with your name and hand-deliver them to your professors.

Checklist

- Make an appointment with each professor at least 3 weeks before you need the letter(s). Be able to discuss where you are applying and why at this time.
- Provide a packet 2 weeks before you need the letters.
- Check (e-mail preferred) with your recommenders about 3 days before your deadline.