

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION- AN OVERVIEW

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Why are they important?

- A crucial component of your graduate school application
- Most graduate, research, and funding applications require them
- Can often be the deciding factor in an application
- Help provide a reviewer with an assessment of your potential to succeed as a graduate student or a researcher

So, it's important to choose carefully!

- Recommenders will most often be a faculty member, but not always.
- May be other professions who know you well and have supervised your academic or research work

Who should you ask for a recommendation?

- Select someone who knows you well and can highlight your achievements based on what the application requirements are.
- Choose a professor at your degree granting institution
 - may want to choose a professor who has a degree similar to what you are seeking.
- Usually, someone with an advanced degree.
- Someone who has supervised you in an internship aligned with the graduate program you are interested in.
- A professor from an upper-division course who knows you and can attest to your ability to succeed.

Who shouldn't you ask for a recommendation?

- Family members or friends
- Political figures
- Professors who may not remember you or, even worse, who do remember you in an unfavorable light



How to ask for a letter of recommendation

- How you ask can have an influence on the type of response you receive and the quality of the recommendation.
- Be prepared and reach out well in advance of any application deadline.
 - Make a list of individuals who you feel will be your best advocates.
 - Request an appointment to discuss your request in person.
 - Be prepared to articulate your reasons applying to the program, job, scholarship, etc.
 - Ask if they are willing to write a strong letter of recommendation, and if they seem reluctant or say no, that's ok.

What else is important?

- A recommender is usually quite honest in their assessment of your abilities and likelihood to succeed.
- Be mindful of your recommender's time.
 - Give plenty of time for your recommender to provide the letter.
 - If possible, your initial contact should be at least two months ahead of an application deadline.



Tips and FAQs



- How many letters of recommendation are usually required?
- Should I send more than the number requests?
- What if I'm graduating and don't plan to attend graduate school for a few years?
- I think my current research supervisor will write a letter of recommendation, but they haven't known me long. What do I do?
- I don't really know any of my professors. What can I do?

More Tips and FAQs

- My instructor seems reluctant but hasn't *actually* said no. Now it's just kind of awkward.
- How can I help my recommenders write a great letter?
 - Create a portfolio: Include application submission details and due dates, supporting materials - a draft of your statement of purpose/cover letter, CV/resume, key talking points of accomplishments to highlight, etc.
 - Give them a way to gently opt out.
- Should the letter be confidential?
 - It depends. Some applications require it to be confidential.
 - A confidential letter indicates a great level of confidence for the applicant.



Questions?

Scan the QR Code to access a workshop satisfaction survey or
access the survey at: bit.ly/3EJX5WP

