

Letters of Recommendation

Welcome Undergrad Researchers!



Purpose of Letter

Ideally, a letter of recommendation highlights an individual's strengths and ability to perform.

When considering who to ask for a letter of recommendation, it is important to think of the following:

- Length of time you've known the writer
- Do they have enough information to write a successful and strong letter for you
- Do you have a positive relationship with the writer
- How will you ask them
- The requirements from the institution/application

Length of Time You've Known Your Writer

The length of time that you've known your writer may not be asked, but can be an important factor to consider.

Some professors aren't very comfortable writing a recommendation letter for a student they don't know well.

However, sometimes the best letter writer (i.e. a P.I. of a current project) may be someone you've known for a couple of months.

If you think this letter writer is necessary, you may need to meet with the writer privately and explain your circumstances and what you are needing. Your professors want to see you win!

Enough Information?

In community colleges, there is an advantage of smaller class sizes as it allows professors to get to know their students passed a name.

It is important that you've made an effort to speak with your prospective letter writer beyond attending assigned class or lab.

Office hours are a great chance to speak with your professor. Here you can discuss your professional goals, how the course prepares you for your aspirations, and ultimately develop a relationship with your professor. This relationship is essential for your professor to write a strong letter of recommendation.

It is advised that you reach out in this manner a minimum of 3 times.

Positive Relationship with Letter Writer

While this may seem like an odd or obvious point, there are times when you may have a professor that seems indifferent.

It is also possible that you may be doing research with someone that has had a negative experience with you.

We are all human! This is okay!

If possible, make attempts to mend the professional relationship. (This is advised even if they aren't writing for you.)

Professors are still humans and have been where you are.

If there is still a level of discomfort, consider others who may be able to write a strong letter.

How to Ask for a Letter of Recommendation

If possible, you should set up a time to meet with the prospective letter writer. (Zoom meetings are a wonderful option if you are time/location challenged)

Remember to acknowledge the impact and importance of your professional relationship with the writer.

Clearly describe the objective of the letter/application.

Provide the writer with any information or requirements needed.

ASK EARLY!!!! There may be many other letters and tasks the writer must do. Give them time to write without feeling rushed or agitated by the time crunch.

Specific Requirements

When you are reviewing your application, be sure to thoroughly review the recommender section for any specifics that are needed.

Some programs want letter writers to have a specific format or include certain sections for their consideration.

Some programs require the letters to be submitted in specific ways.

It is best practice to know and explain the specific requirements for the writer PRIOR to asking them.

Other things to keep in mind

Most letter writers ask for at least 2 weeks notice, but you should email them sooner (may not initially see your email, need time to write a good letter)

★ Send reminder emails!

Some recommenders will have a template of questions for you to answer (e.g. What was your grade in my class? What was the most memorable moment for you in my class?)

Many applications specify how many letter writers are required/recommended and will specify who you should be asking for a letter.

Many applications will ask if you want to view a submitted letter of recommendation (it is advised you opt out of this)

If an application recommends that you submit more letters of recommendation than the baseline requirement, try your best to ask for additional letters of recommendation.

Questions?

We are happy to answer any questions you may have!

If you have any questions not asked in the meeting please feel free to send us an email.

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