



## LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION TIPS

Professors/faculty and counselors are generally pleased to write recommendations for students to help with internships, career positions, and scholarships and other awards. However, keep in mind they are asked to write a lot of references within similar time frames. Strong recommendations require **your** timely and careful preparation.

Request your Letter(s) of Recommendation well in advance and provide your recommender(s) with all the necessary materials at least one month before the due date. \*See more info below.

### Understanding the Purpose of Letters of Recommendation

Letters of Recommendation are intended to provide a candid viewpoint of a student's abilities and professional promise; they are endorsements of the quality of your character. When organizations provide scholarship funding to students, they want to have confidence that each student will demonstrate values that are in alignment with their goals and mission. What recommenders **don't say** in their letter(s), is often as important as what they say.

Select current or previous teachers and professors who have expertise in your chosen field of study, as they can best describe your abilities to excel. It is not only acceptable, but wise to ask two different teachers for a letter. If necessary, you may also request one from your guidance counselor. The stronger relationships you build before you need your letter, the greater the recommender's ability to speak to your specific strengths and attributes.

Other examples of people to consider may be a manager or mentor, co-worker or classmate, or industry professional. They can speak to your character and work ethic, and ideally, have experience in your chosen field of study or a similar discipline. It is important to exhaust all other professional options before asking a personal friend.

### Prepare in advance

- Thoroughly read the application and ascertain what the ideal applicant looks like from the reader's perspective, and what specific types of criteria it refers to.
- Brainstorm which individuals might be best for this purpose, and include on your list both how you know them and how long you have known them, as well as what things about you that they could comment on.
- Ensure those you ask will provide positive comments. Select professor/teacher recommenders on the basis of your classroom performance. In order to write a strong letter, your academic advisor needs an understanding of your classroom connections.
- Classes you struggled in or had to work harder reflect how you demonstrate resilience and handle setbacks. Such teachers/professors can also provide excellent references.

## How to Ask for a Letter of Recommendation

When you ask for a Letter of Recommendation, choose the mode of communication that suits the recommender's availability. If possible, try to schedule an informal and in-person meeting to discuss the opportunity. This makes the process more human and enables you to have the recommender's full attention. If you cannot schedule an in-person meeting, do so via zoom, over the phone, or put your request in an email. Above all else, be well-prepared and articulate information in a warm and enthusiastic manner that facilitates a smooth and memorable experience.

## What to Provide

If the individual responds in a positive manner, follow up with an email. This should contain all the details they need to provide you a quality letter. If your initial request is by email, wait until you have a response in the affirmative before providing all of this additional information.

- **Clearly explain how the letter will be used;** attaching a link to the scholarship/program, position, or experience you are applying to is very helpful and provides context.
- **Attach an updated copy of your resume.**
- **Subject matter to focus on.** Provide the key qualities or succinct explanation of what you want your recommender to highlight.
- **Letter writing and templates.** Your recommender may work from their own template, or they may ask you to provide a template for their use to more readily tailor the letter to you. Have one ready in advance that is tailored to each scholarship/program.
- **Include due dates, logistics, and submission information.** This should be specific for each scholarship/program, and include any specific format(s), submission methods (printed vs. emailed), signature, and other requirements.
- **Stay organized and be respectful of their time.** Ask your recommender their personal preference regarding how they prefer to communicate with you during the process, and how often, if applicable, they want you to check in.

## After you request a recommendation

- Send a timely thank you note to the recommender and express your gratitude for their time. If any provide multiple recommendations for different scholarships/programs that are completed and due at different times, you should send a separate thank you note for each letter.
- Send a message to your recommender one week before the due date so they have a reminder and your contact information (including your phone number).
- Provide your recommender status updates on your application, regardless of the outcome.