

SO YOU'D LIKE A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

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A letter of recommendation is needed when a university or employer requests one or if you are establishing a placement file. Some organizations will require a letter, some require the professor fill out a form, some require both.

Your professors are asked to write many such letters during the year, especially during spring semester. Your thoughtfulness and careful preparation will help during your professor be able to write the best letter possible. Remember, that a student must take responsibility and initiative in the letter writing process. Although professors will vary their preferences, here are some general guidelines to follow:

A. Asking the professor to write a letter of recommendation

1) Ask the professor in person.

The important words above are:

- **“ask”**-no professor owes you a letter. You are requesting help from that person; make your statement in the form of a request. Be willing to take “no” for an answer.
- **“in person”**-do not put the request under an office door or leave in a mailbox or grab the professor in the hallway or after class. Ask the professor to write a letter when they will have time to discuss this with you, preferable during their posted office hour.

2) Ask if the professor would be able to write you're a favorable letter of recommendation,

- If the professor cannot honestly write a favorable letter, you will want to find another person who will.

3) Ask if the professor would be able to write you a specific letter of recommendation.

- If the professor does not know you well enough to be specific in their comments, the letter will not do you much good anyway. Ask someone else.

B. Your responsibility: What you should do for the professor

1) Allow ample time for the professor to write the letter.

- At least two weeks or more should be allowed.

2) Provide the professor with all the relevant forms and instructions.

- Put all materials in large envelope (your name, PO and phone number) so the materials don't get lost.
- If the organization provides a form of letter, give the form to the professor,
- If the organization provides general instructions for preparing the letter, make a copy of the instructions for the professor. Highlight the instructions.
- Make sure the professor has the correct address, person/organization to whom the letter is addressed (make sure all this spelled correctly), and the deadline for submitting the letter.

3) Type in all the information you are responsible for providing.

- Type your name and the other information on all the forms, where needed (do not hand write!).

4) Provide the professor with your resume and statement of your goals.

- In writing, remind the professor of your major(s) and minor(s), which classes you took from the professor, term when you took the classes and grade received in those classes.
- Provide the professor with any information about your participation in the class, projects completed, etc. Help your professor recall your class performance in as much detail as possible.
- Remind the professor about teaching assistantships, internships, research projects, grants.
- Provide the professor with a statement of your career goals and/or reasons for choosing the university/job for which you are applying.

5) Provide the professor with an addressed envelope for each recommendation.

- Type the correct address on each envelope (ask for university stationary enveloped if they are needed).

6) Make sure the professor has sent the letter of recommendation.

- Politely check with the professor a few days before the deadline to make sure the letter has been completed and sent.

7) Follow up the recommendation with a thank-you letter to the professor.

Letters of recommendation take time, thought an effort. Let the recommender know you appreciate the effort made on your behalf.

C. Do students get copies of the letters of recommendation?

1) Each professor will have a policy in giving students copies of the recommendations.

- You may ask the professor what the policy is, if you desire a copy.

2) Some professors will be willing to discuss their recommendations with you after they are written.

- If you wish, you may ask your professor if s/he would be willing to discuss the recommendations with you.