

Requesting a Letter of Recommendation



When applying to graduate school or for employment, you may be asked to provide letters of recommendation. The following tips will help you to demonstrate your professionalism and improve the quality of letters of recommendation written on your behalf.

Prepare Your References

- Contact potential references who could write a letter of recommendation (instructors, faculty advisors, research advisors, internship mentors, etc.) in advance to ask whether they are willing to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Never assume that they will do this for you.
- Once someone has agreed to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf, provide them with updated information about yourself, such as: current resume, successful work from class, e-portfolio URL, etc.
- If you are seeking employment, inform the reference about the type of positions to which you will be applying and the qualifications that are required. Providing specific job postings will assist your reference to effectively target his/her comments to support your candidacy.
- If you are applying to graduate school, be sure to indicate this, as well as the specific programs to which you will be seeking admission. Letters for graduate school applications are usually focused on different factors than those written for employment.
- Remember: the more information you give to the reference, the stronger the reference letter will be.

Maintain Positive Contact with Your References

- Thank your references for the time they have spent writing letters on your behalf. Saying “thank you” is not only courteous, but it also makes your reference feel valued.
- Give your references enough time to respond: last minute requests are not professional!
- Stay in touch with your references during the time that you are actively job searching or applying to graduate school.
- Send a thank you note or call your reference when you learn the outcome of your search/applications.
- Do not lose contact with your references. Maintaining relationships with them is good professional etiquette. Occasionally send a note or email updating them on your new career-related experiences.
- Do not assume that your instructors will remember you and your work; they may teach hundreds of students each semester. Call to refresh the instructor’s memory of you and your achievements.