

## Asking for Letters of Recommendation

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Asking for a letter of recommendation takes some planning on your part. Here are some tips to help ensure that you make the best impression when asking for a recommendation.

- **Ask someone who is familiar with your work and accomplishments.** A letter from someone who can personally speak to your work will be much more effective than an impersonal letter from a “star” in the field. When deciding who to ask for a recommendation, consider professors from undergraduate and graduate school, internship and work supervisors, and other mentors with whom you have worked closely. As a general rule, letters of recommendation should not be written by family members.
- **Contact potential references as soon as you begin to consider applying for an opportunity.** (Some faculty members require recommendation requests at least 3 weeks in advance.) Show consideration for the reference by giving him/her ample time to craft the recommendation.
- **Help your reference know what to write.** Ask the person who is writing the recommendation how you can make it easier for him/her. Offer to make an in-person appointment to talk about the opportunity and your qualifications, as well as points that you would like highlighted. Also offer to provide this information via email or phone if either is easier for your reference. Provide your resume and personal statement and offer to send transcripts and writing samples.
- **If your letter of recommendation is to be submitted online, make sure make sure your reference has the correct URL and is aware of the deadline.** If recommendations are to be mailed, provide your reference with stamped and addressed envelopes and any forms that he/she is required to sign or fill out.
- **If you anticipate needing multiple copies of a letter, let your reference know so that he or she can save a copy for future use.** Assume that this is the case, too, if you anticipate asking that person to write a different version of the letter for something else in the future.
- **Take no for an answer.** If a potential reference hesitates or appears uncomfortable by your request, he or she may not be willing or able to write you a strong letter of recommendation. In this case, it is to your advantage to withdraw your request and find someone else who can confidently write you a strong letter.
- **Send a thank you note to anyone who writes you a letter of recommendation.** This is both professional and considerate. Plus, you never know when you may want to request that person’s assistance again in the future.