

# A Student's Guide to Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are a way to create a partnership with your recommender as you invite them to your application journey. But asking someone to become a recommender can be intimidating, so we've got some tips to help make the process easier for you.

And remember -- faculty members expect (and hope) to participate in these sorts of projects because they love working in education and are eager to support you!

## Choosing a Recommender

- ✓ How meaningful are your **past experiences** with your potential recommender? If you have an active relationship with them, like if you frequently visited your professor during office hours or worked on research projects with them, then they can write a strong and genuine letter for you.
- ✓ What is the **overall theme** you are advancing in your application? Think of a recommendation letter as a part of the whole. Make sure your recommender can enrich the stories and goals you put forth in your application.
- ✓ Does your program require **specific criteria**? Remember that your primary concern with the letter (and your application in general) is to adhere to your application's criteria, so you'll want to choose a recommender who can help with that.

## Framing Your Request

- ✓ Reach out **sooner rather than later** (at least three weeks before the due date!) You want to respect your recommender's time.
- ✓ Provide the letter's **due date**.
- ✓ Relay the **main details about the program itself**, like the title and a brief description.
- ✓ Explain briefly **why** you think the person would be a great option for writing a letter and what you hope they can write about.
- ✓ **Proofread** your language to ensure it is intentional and easy-to-read.

## Additional Details

Your initial request can be **succinct**. You don't need to include every detail. Instead, assure your potential recommender that you'll provide follow-up details if they decide they can write the letter and have these things ready in case your recommender asks for them:

- ✓ Resume, transcript, and **other formal documents**.
- ✓ Notes of **examples** that depict your relationship with your recommender so they know what they should stress in their letter.
- ✓ **The work you've done so far** for your application, like your personal statement.

## What Happens if They Say 'Yes'?

Congrats! You two are now a partnership, so you still need to work with your recommender as they develop their letter. Make sure you do these things:

- ✓ **Update** your recommender on major stages in the application, like when you submit the application. This will show you appreciate them as an essential part of your journey.
- ✓ Send your recommender **a gentle reminder** as the due date approaches and ask if they need more information.
- ✓ Keep note of **requests**, like if they want you to send certain information (perhaps a resume).
- ✓ Remember to **thank them!**

## What Happens if They Say 'No'?

No worries! There might be a few reasons why they're unavailable. Maybe they have a busy schedule or earnestly feel someone else would be better equipped to help you. Many of us writing partners at the HUB have been there. You should feel confident that you had the **courage** to ask someone! And then check with someone else!

