

# Letter of Recommendation Request Guide

## **WHO you should ask?**

- **First**, check to see if there are any restrictions as to who can write the letter. Depending on what you need the letter for, the organization may give you guidelines (e.g., a teacher you had a class with vs. biology teacher, supervisor, etc.)
  - You should **not** ask your friends or family. Organizations will typically have this restriction stated as well.
- It is best to ask someone who has known you for an extended period of time and in a capacity that allows them to speak to who you are as a person rather than simply based on surface-level observations or knowledge (e.g., grades or honors that you received).
- Ideas for who you could ask:
  - An instructor you had a class with - preferably one that you really connected with, might have done a project with, visited their office hours multiple times or one with whom you discussed your academic/career goals
  - Advisor
  - Supervisor at work (or through volunteering/service-learning)
- Plan your backups. Not everyone will agree to write you a letter. Some won't have the time and others may not write one because they don't feel as though they know you well enough in a professional capacity.

## **WHEN should you ask?**

- It's courteous to give **at least 4 weeks** notice before the letter is due. This will give the recommender adequate time to reflect on their interactions with you and schedule time for themselves to write and edit the letter.
- If you cannot give at least 4 weeks notice, you can still ask for a letter, but keep in mind that the person might not have the time OR their letter might not be as strong as it would be if they had had more time.

## **HOW should you ask?**

- It's okay to ask over e-mail, but you should also set up a time to meet with them in person to discuss the content of the letter.
- Be sure to let them know what the letter is for, when it is due, and how it should be submitted (they send it via e-mail, they send it to you as a PDF to submit with your application, they mail directly, etc.).
- Provide to them your most recent resume/CV and/or personal statement (if you have one).

## **After you ask**

- Be sure to check in with them a couple of weeks before the letter is due reminding them of the due date.
- Send them a thank you e-mail or letter.

## **Questions for you to answer in order to help your recommender with the letter:**

1. How long (years/months) have you known the person from whom you are requesting a letter, and in what capacity do you know him/her?
2. What makes this person particularly well suited to write a letter for you?
3. If you took classes from the recommender, how did you distinguish yourself in these classes? What grades did you earn in these classes?

4. What are your greatest academic accomplishments? Include membership in honor societies, involvement in student clubs, academic scholarships received, research involvement, etc.
5. Are there any non-academic accomplishments you would like the recommender to know about (e.g., employment, volunteering, etc.)?
6. What are your long-term goals? How will this position/honor/award help you achieve them?
7. What skills or attributes would the recommender have observed that you would like him/her to highlight in your letter? Offer specific examples of how you demonstrated those attributes.
8. Additional comments (research project and advisor, interesting jobs, hobbies, etc.)?
9. List the programs to which you are applying and the address, in order from earliest to latest due date:

<b>Due Date (first to last)</b>	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Method of Submission (e-mail, mail, with application, etc.)</b>	<b>Address for Submission</b>

[Adapted from a Seattle University resource]

#### References:

- <https://www.uwb.edu/careers/job-search-tools/recommendation>
- <https://www.seattleu.edu/scieng/advising/advising-and-support/letters-of-recommendation/>
- <https://spu.edu/depts/eng/documents/RECOMMENDATIONLETTEREtiquette.pdf>
- <https://www.seattleu.edu/scieng/advising/advising-and-support/letters-of-recommendation/preparing-your-materials/>