

How to Request Letters of Recommendation

Wabash College Schroeder Center for Career Development and Dean of the College's Office

Develop strong professional relationships with your professors. Some ways to develop these relationships include taking small classes, taking multiple classes with a professor, contributing to class discussion, attending office hours, and pursuing an independent study or summer research opportunity. Attending departmental or division colloquia and events also helps forge positive relationships.

Save coursework with instructors' comments. Recommenders write stronger letters when they can describe specifics of their interactions: for example, a particularly strong paper, classroom interaction, independent study, or project during an internship. Therefore, when requesting a letter, it helps recommenders if you remind them of these kinds of specifics. Admissions committees tell us that specific facts are more persuasive than general comments that a student is "hard-working" or "smart."

Define your professional goals, carefully research graduate programs online, in-person, and via conversations with faculty and alumni. Prepare applications for the programs that inspire you to reach your objectives. Pay special attention to GPA and test requirements; be sure you qualify for admission.

Contact professors at least 4-6 weeks in advance of the final application deadline. Ask in person and bring your documents, even draft statements. Explain why you have chosen the specific program(s), how they relate to your professional goals, and how this specific letter supports your application.

Provide your professors with supporting materials: (1) your resumé; (2) personal statement(s); (3) a list of the schools you are applying to and all addresses, forms, and instructions; (4) due dates for each letter; and (5) a signed FERPA release form [\[optional\]](#). Have unofficial copies of your transcript ready. (Some programs have earlier application deadlines for students seeking funding.)

Proofread and edit your supporting materials before giving them to your professors. They should represent your very best work, not a first draft. Why would someone spend time to write a letter of recommendation for a student who did not put time into the application materials? Why would a graduate program admit you over another who submitted outstanding materials?

Waive your right to read letters of recommendation if the application form provides you with this choice. Admission committees may take letters of recommendation more seriously from those who do.

Be certain you will apply to a program for which you are asking professors to write letters of recommendation. If you are on the fence about going through with it, talk with your professor first.

Send a polite reminder to your professors when an application deadline is approaching.

Thank your professors promptly for writing letters of recommendation. And then **let them know** whether you were admitted, and where you have decided to attend.

Letter of Recommendation Request Form

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Include your most recent resume with this document and the academic release document ([here](#))

Today's Date

Date Needed

Student Name

Class Year

Email Address

Phone

Overall GPA

Major

Major GPA

Provide at least two specific examples of course or professional experiences with this recommender.

Describe your professional goals and how this opportunity supports them.

What are three attributes/topics you would like this recommender to discuss?

If you are asking three different people for letters, make sure they provide a holistic view.