



Securing Strong Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School

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Why Do I Need a Letter of Recommendation?

- ▶ **Applications for:**
 - ▶ Graduate school
 - ▶ Internships/Jobs
 - ▶ Fellowships
 - ▶ Scholarships
 - ▶ Joining a new research lab

What is a Letter of Recommendation?

- ▶ **A formal document that addresses the following:**
 - ▶ **Qualifications for a specific position (varies).**
 - ▶ **Attestation of Experience and Skills.**
 - ▶ **Attestation of Character Strengths**
 - ▶ **Dedication, motivation, and resiliency.**

What is a **STRONG** Letter of Recommendation?

- ▶ **Powerful**
- ▶ **Bold**
- ▶ **Forceful**
- ▶ **Consistent**

Who Should Write You a Letter of Recommendation?

- ▶ Faculty or staff who have known you for at least 1-2 years.
 - ▶ Takes time to develop these relationships.
- ▶ Campus organization in which you have volunteered for in the past 1-2 years.
 - ▶ Reach out to director and specific administration.
- ▶ Professor whose class you have taken and done well in (earned A or B) for multiple semesters.
 - ▶ C's can be okay, if the class was very challenging (i.e., improved your grade over the semester, or re-took the course with the same professor)- Subjective

Who Should NOT Write You a Letter of Recommendation?

- ▶ Faculty or staff who have known you for less than 6 months or 1 semester
- ▶ Campus organization in which you have volunteered for in the past month.
 - ▶ Time and dedication are key variables.
- ▶ Professor whose class you have enjoyed and have taken only one semester.
 - ▶ Very important to acknowledge your good experience, but what has the professor learned about you in 4 months?

Creating Mentor & Academic Relationships

- ▶ **Quality relationships lead to quality letters.**
- ▶ **Create bonds.**
 - ▶ If they are a professor go to their office hours for help.
 - ▶ Talk about shared interests.
 - ▶ Talk about graduate programs.
 - ▶ Keep continuous contact and keep them updated about academic progress, especially if you are no longer taking a class with them.
- ▶ **Build and maintain those mentor/academic relationships.**

Nurturing Academic & Mentor Relationships

- ▶ Excellent students have an easier time forming relationships with professors/mentors.
 - ▶ Work ethic, accountability, responsibility.
- ▶ Bond with your professors based on their area of expertise and passions.
 - ▶ Attend conferences or workshops.
- ▶ Offer to help with projects and research studies (this benefits you as well on your resume/CV)
- ▶ Fill your professors in on your long-term goals and reasons for pursuing higher education

Helpful Questions to Start Conversations with Professors/Mentors

- ▶ **What is graduate school?**
- ▶ **Why should I attend graduate school?**
- ▶ **Is the PhD application process different from an MA/MS process?**
- ▶ **As an undergraduate student, can I start looking into PhD programs? If so, what steps should I take?**

Asking for the Letter of Recommendation

- ▶ **Make a formal request to your mentor/professor for a letter of recommendation.**
- ▶ **Have a plan and write out the purpose for the recommendation and why you have chosen them.**
- ▶ **Give them time to respond.**
 - ▶ **At least 3-4 weeks.**
 - ▶ **Send a 2-week reminder.**
 - ▶ **Sometimes send a reminder 1-2 days before the due date.**

Asking for the Letter of Recommendation

- ▶ **Submit portfolio (hard copy or digital)**
 - ▶ Ask for professor's preference.
- ▶ **Graduate School Summary (see Excel)**
- ▶ **List of skills, strengths, and talents to be emphasized.**

Table of Contents

- I. Cover Letter
- II. Resume (CV Optional)
 - Degrees, Certificates, etc.
 - Skills & Achievements
 - Publications and Research
 - Volunteer Work
- III. Statement of Purpose Essay
- IV. Letters of Recommendation
- V. College & Scholarship Applications
- VI. Achievements

Emphasize/Address the Following:

- ▶ The writer's relationship with applicant, including number of years.
- ▶ Be sure to address any gaps in your educational journey such as breaks or periods in which you had a low GPA.
- ▶ Explain why the applicant is a good fit for the position.

Activity Time

List all your skills

- ▶ Data management.
- ▶ SPSS
- ▶ Customer service skills
- ▶ Clinical skills- motivational interviewing
- ▶ Effective Communication

List all your talents or strengths.

- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Diligence
- ▶ Courage
- ▶ Perseverance



Questions?

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