



Letters of Recommendation

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Letters of Recommendation

- Importance
- How Many
- Whom Should I ask
- How Should I approach Potential Letter Writers
- Getting Good Letters of Recommendation
- Do graduate schools care about confidentiality

Importance of Letters

- Grades and Tests Scores (Most Important Factor)
- Letters of Recommendation (A Deciding Factor)
 - Can be the deciding factor for your acceptance
 - Strengthen your application
 - Can clarify or outweigh deficiencies in your application

Whom Should I Ask?

- Someone who knows you well
- Someone with the title of “Professor”
- Someone at the school granting your baccalaureate degree
- Someone who has earned the degree for which you are seeking
- Someone who has academically evaluated you in an upper division class
- Do not ask family, friends, political figures, or the like. These are usually detrimental.

Whom Should I Ask?

- Who knows you well enough to comment on your ability to succeed at the graduate level?
 - A professor of an upper division course
 - Seminars, Research Methods, Directed Readings, Projects and Research, Psych Practicum
 - Speak up in class, ask questions, take more than one class from a professor, meet with them during office hours
 - Supervisor in a work related field
 - Not as powerful
- The typical number of letters required is (3-5)
 - Send only the number requested

Approaching Faculty

- Request a letter of recommendation in person
- Approach them preferably two months before the deadline. **Absolute minimum is two weeks**
- Ask the faculty member or the employer
 - Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation?
 - Do you feel you know me well enough to write a strong letter?
- Be prepared to discuss your interest and reasons for attending graduate school
- Schedule an appointment with your recommenders
- If you take time off before graduate school request a letter to be written and then have the letter writer update it when you do apply for graduate school

Organize, Organize, Organize

- In your meeting with your recommender, provide a folder with the following:
 - Addresses of Schools to which you are applying and the Application Deadlines
 - Addressed & Stamped Envelops
 - Rating forms (paper clipped to the corresponding envelop)
 - How you can be reached if necessary
 - A portfolio

Provide Information to the Writer

- Assume that your letter writer will remember nothing. You should provide all information you would like to have appear in the letter of recommendation.
 - Your GPA and Transcripts
 - A List of relevant courses taken
 - Titles and abstracts of any research papers you have written
 - Honor societies to which you belong
 - Awards that you have won
 - Activities in which you have participated (professionally relevant only)
 - Relevant work experience
 - Service activities such as volunteer work
 - A description of your professional goals
 - Copies of admissions essays, personal statements, & cover letters
 - Information about your experiences with the letter writer (e.g., courses taken, copies of papers, etc.)
 - <http://gradschool.about.com/cs/askingforletters/f/recfaq1.htm>: Tara Kuther, Ph.D.

Final Notes

- We want to help you succeed. You will be nervous asking but you don't need to be.
 - Remember that your professor's reputation is associated with the letter and your performance
 - Your performance at graduate school may impact other WSU students from being accepted
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- Reciprocate by sending a thank you note
 - You may need a reference in the future