

Letters of Recommendation: A Short Guide for Students & Faculty

For STUDENTS to Consider:

About Recommendation Requests

- *Take the kinds of actions that ensure that people will want to recommend you:* be engaged, professional, courteous, and responsive in your classes and other activities.
- *Ask potential recommenders to consider your request far in advance of deadlines.* Some professors require that students request letters as long as six weeks before the deadline.
- *Consider which recommendations to submit for each opportunity.* Follow guidelines and consider what fits. A letter about your academic performance, perhaps from someone with whom you have studied a particular subject or taken a recent class? A letter from a supervisor at a job, internship, or volunteer experience? If submitting more than one recommendation, consider how these can work together to show diverse facets of your experience.
- *If someone says no or suggests that you consider asking someone else.* . . . Understand that you do not want a letter from someone who cannot write a strong one for you, whether because of your performance, or that person's own overloaded schedule. Always have a backup plan for asking a different potential recommender. Consider asking how you could have made a stronger request, in which case you may get some valuable feedback on how to ensure you are the kind of candidate for whom people want to write recommendations.
- *For future reference . . .* Even if you do not need a letter of recommendation right away, you could consider asking supervisors or professors about requesting one in the future. Ask about their expectations and policies for considering such requests. Knowing more about such standards may help you to perform better or to make a stronger request in the future.

About Information Needed

- *When you make a request, provide your recommender with specific descriptions of what you are applying for, why you are applying for it, and why you are asking for a recommendation.* Be clear and specific about what is required and when.
- *Offer to provide materials the recommender needs to write the letter.* Consider offering a sample of coursework (ideally with the professor's comments), a transcript, a resume, and a draft of any writing (such as a personal statement or application essays) required by the opportunity. Confirm the preferred format for providing such materials.
- *Understand what your rights and obligations are as an applicant in terms of educational privacy.* If you are asking a Lewis & Clark professor to send a recommendation to a person or institution beyond Lewis & Clark, you must submit a written "[Authorization to Release Educational Record Information](#)" form to the Registrar's office. Additionally, if you have the option to reserve or waive your right to later consult a letter as part of your educational record, inform the professor about your decision when you request the recommendation. Ask a mentor or advisor to explain this process to you if you need help understanding it.

After a Recommendation is Submitted

- *Thank your recommenders* (with a simple email or card), and notify them about the outcome of your application!