

How to ask for letters of recommendation for your graduate school applications



Recommendation letters are a crucial piece of your graduate school application. Hopefully you have been cultivating relationships with your professors throughout your educational journey so they are well aware of your abilities long before you request a letter of support. A positive recommendation letter from a professor shows the graduate school that you have demonstrated previous success and have the potential to succeed in a new environment. You will want to select your recommender carefully, and provide them with the information and resources they need in a timely manner. When requesting a letter from a faculty member, ask them if they can provide you with a positive letter of recommendation. If the instructor does not respond with enthusiasm, it's best to move on to a different faculty member; as a half-hearted recommendation will do more harm than good for your candidacy.

Schools will generally ask you for two or three letters but some may ask for more. Three or more letters from faculty that are highly complimentary about your abilities will be difficult for a graduate admission office to ignore.

To learn more about preparation for your letter, view the tips and resource links below.

The things you should supply to the recommender:

- The relevant recommendation forms. Many schools require recommendations be on specific forms and sent to specific addresses.
- Your transcript. Your professor cannot remember every detail about you. Your transcript can help fill in these blanks.
- Your Resume. This will show the entirety of your academic career and give the professor more background in writing your letter.
- Your graduate school essay(s). Your essay supports your reasons for pursuing graduate school and why you should be considered, which can greatly help a professor create a letter that supports your case.
- Details you want highlighted. Identify for your professors what skills and experience would be helpful to emphasize.
- Time. A great letter (and you) are worth the time. Ask your recommender for his/her timeframe, but plan on at least several weeks.

Additional Resources:

[Recommendation Letters: Tips, Tricks, and Advice](#), WriteExpress.com

[Tips for Requesting Letters of Recommendation](#), gradschool.cornell.edu

[Dos and Don'ts for Requesting a Recommendation Letter for Grad School](#), gradschool.about.com