

HOW TO GET LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FROM A PROFESSOR



Summary: *Obtaining a letter of recommendation from a professor for admission to a graduate program can be easy by following these steps.*

Start collecting letters of recommendation early on in your career. It is easier to get them when you are fresh in someone's mind instead of having to approach them a year or more later. Here is an ABC of how to get letters of recommendations from professors and employers.

Ask a professor that knows you well:

- Give 1-2 months' notice. Understand that they are busy and will not be able to write one for you in just a few days.
- Ask politely if they are comfortable giving a strong letter of recommendation. If they have concerns over your candidacy for graduate school admission or a job, address those concerns.
- If they are willing to write a letter for you, write a thank you note.
- If they are not willing, contact the next person on your list. Do not pressure them or get angry that they are unwilling.
- If they do not respond, send a follow-up email. Once again, professors are busy so give them a few days to get to your request before inquiring.
- Never assume that a professor will write a letter for you because you do not know what they have on their plate already.

Prepare an information packet to help your professor easily write a strong letter on your behalf:

- Prove a reminder of how you know the professor, such as what classes you took from them with the semester and year.
- Your current student status with the planned or actual date of graduation.
- A description of your professional goals which can be in the form of a copy of your graduate school application essay, a cover letter or other item that shows your intentions for the your career.
- If you are applying for graduate school, provide the admission standards.
- If applying for something other than graduate school, provide the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the position.
- Another reminder of who you are, including how you did in their class, copies of your work with grades and comments attached, maybe even a photo to help jog their memory.
- Your overall GPA and major GPA
- Test scores for things like GRE, GMAT, LSAT, and SAT
- Current resume with volunteer and internship experiences.
- List of any papers, presentations or other research experiences you have been involved in.
- List of any clubs, honor societies, or organizations you are a member of.
- A deadline for the letter, of which you will send a reminder a week before it is due.
- Link to PDF fillable form or web links plus advance notice that they will be receiving an email from the institution.
- Or a pre-addressed envelope with postage

Thank your recommender twice:

- One after the faculty member has written the letter
- Another letter when you know the outcome of your application

Ending things on good terms keeps the door open for next time when you need another letter. Taking a little bit of time to make things easier for your recommender will produce better results. These steps can be easily adapted to a manager or other professional that can provide a recommendation for you.

What should you do if you don't have a professor that you feel comfortable asking for a recommendation? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about the importance of getting a letter of recommendation, read these articles:

- [Humor: What Employee Recommendations Really Mean](#)
- [The Importance of Letters of Recommendation to Getting an Offer](#)
- [Two Strategies to Get a Job in an Unrelated Field](#)

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