

Guidelines for Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation provide graduate schools, professional schools, and potential employers with an honest appraisal of your academic preparation, character, and extracurricular activities. The stronger you are in these areas and the more evidence you provide your recommender about these accomplishments, the stronger your recommendation letter will be.

When Beginning Your Studies

Save your Written Assignments.

- Your professors will be able to write more complete and compelling letters if you provide samples of your best work in their classes.
- Ideally, you should provide the recommender photo-copies of the original assignment with grade and comments.

Get to Know Potential Recommenders.

- In general, letters will be stronger if you do well in more than one class with a particular professor. Get to know your professors and let them get to know you. Take advantage of your professors' office hours.

When Requesting a Recommendation

Whom to Ask?

- When a faculty member writes a recommendation letter, he or she will discuss the class(es) you have taken from him or her, as well as the grade(s) you earned. It is usually not a good idea to request a letter from a professor who has not had you in class for a full quarter yet.

Give Your Professor at Least Three Weeks Advance Notice.

- This is very important! Application season is very busy for both students and faculty. Please allow at least three weeks for a professor to submit a recommendation letter.
- Please do not request letters unless you are serious about applying to the schools or jobs for which you are requesting them.

Submit a Complete Portfolio.

- Provide your recommender with the following: an up-to-date resume or curriculum vitae, a draft of your personal statement, a copy of your unofficial transcript, and copies of writing samples. If any forms are required, please include them and remember to sign them where appropriate.

Provide Mailing Labels Rather than Stamped Addressed Envelopes.

- All letters are sent out on official department stationery. Please don't worry about supplying stamped addressed envelopes.
- If you are applying to multiple graduate programs, please provide your recommender with mailing labels.

Respect the Confidentiality of the Process.

- Letters of recommendation mean little without the promise of honesty and confidentiality. Please waive your right to read the letter at a later date.
- Unless the recipient specifically requires that the student submit all materials together, letters from Political Science faculty will be sent directly to the graduate program or potential employer.