



Getting Great Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are an important component of your scholarship or fellowship application. These tips will help get great letters.

Whom do you ask?

- Check the criteria first. Do they require writers have the title of professor? Do they want an advisor, a community member, or a work supervisor?
- Think about who knows you best. Fellowships committees would rather get a detailed letter from someone they don't know than a generic letter from a VIP.

When do you ask?

- Early! Aim to give recommenders at least one month before the deadline. Less than two weeks is risky.

How do you ask?

- Ask politely, ideally in person. Make an appointment. Ask in your own words: "Would you be able to provide a strong letter for me?"
- Provide information:
 - Tell the writer why you are asking them. Did an aspect of the course inspire you to choose your major? Does the scholarship relate to a project you worked on for the course?
 - Create a bulleted list with details on how you know the writer: When did you meet? What courses did you take? How else did you interact?
 - Give them a copy of your resume or cv, and potentially essay drafts or a copy of your student academic summary.
 - If you're applying for multiple awards or programs, give them a full list including deadlines and submission details.
- You should waive your right to read the letters. Confidential letters are preferred – and in some cases required – by fellowship foundations.
- Send a polite reminder and thank you a week before the deadline.
- Follow up later thanking them and letting them know the results!

Common Concerns and Questions:

Writing recommendations is part of a professor's job, and following these tips will help professors of even very large classes.

→ You can always contact the office of fellowships with questions or for guidance on choosing and preparing recommenders.

→ Note: You should never draft your own letter. Providing the information above helps prepare the writers to do the job themselves.

