

Requesting Recommendations

The recommendation letter or form is a common requirement for graduate-level admissions applications. It can be stressful to rely on others when completing an admissions application by a strict deadline; therefore, we are offering the following suggestions and best practices to get the documents you need in a timely manner.

- Give yourself (and your recommender!) plenty of time to complete the process well in advance of the program's deadline. We would suggest asking your recommender 3-4 weeks before the deadline.
- Check how the institution's application system works. If the application system automatically sends recommendation requests to your recommenders via e-mail, it is common courtesy to request their recommendations **before** entering their contact information.
- Provide your recommenders with information about yourself. Most programs require recommendations from academic references, and your former professors may have taught quite a few students in their careers. In order to differentiate yourself from other students, you could include:
 - Courses you took with the recommender
 - Semester date
 - Special projects or papers
 - Resume or curriculum vita
 - Statement of purpose for the program to which you are currently applying

This information will also help them craft a recommendation specific to your accomplishments, work ethic, etc., which is vital information for the admissions committee.

- Give them time to write and submit your recommendation. Since admissions deadlines (especially for a fall start date) can cluster around the same time period, your recommenders may have received multiple recommendation requests. Common courtesy dictates at least a three-week window before following up if you still have not received the recommendation. Again, this is why we encourage you to contact your recommenders well before the deadline.
- Check your application status at least once a week. You will not know if you need to follow up with your recommenders (after three weeks) if you do not know your application status.
- Thank your recommenders. On average, it can easily take several hours for each recommendation provided. Ideally, write a handwritten note instead of an e-mail.
- Follow up with the results! Your recommender supported your application, so send a quick e-mail to share your news.