

Group Leader

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This document is inspired by a similar file put together by C. Topaz (Williams College).

Please read the following information carefully if you are considering asking for a recommendation letter I am here to support you in your path to success through graduate school, a career, a scholarship, or an on-campus position. This is much easier if you follow the procedures below.

Am I the Right Pick?

First, think carefully if a letter from me would be the best choice. Can I say anything about you beyond your grade in my course or someone I only met once? If this is all I know or remember about you the letter will be weak and have a negative impact on your application.

You still want a letter from me?

Good recommendation letters are detailed and highlight specific interactions with the student. They should be honest and positive overall and should be written in a way that it would be unique to you. Consider giving me any information you think would help your case in my letter as well as additional documents you think would help me (e.g., transcripts, research statement, publications, resume, etc.).

Bullet Point List

Please provide me a rough bullet point list of items you want me to include in your letter that would help your case. If there is a certain school or job that is more important let me know. Give me a list of all the schools you are applying to so I can make a dedicated tailored letter for that school. This also helps me view the things you think are important for this specific application. I will not promise to use all or some of the bullet points, but it will help in writing the letter. Please answer the following questions with the bullet points:

1. What is your name, year in school, field of study?
2. For what are you applying (grad school, job, on-campus role)?
3. How long have I known you and in what capacity (instructor, research advisor)?
4. As a student what classes did you take from me? What was the grade?
5. What characteristics describe yourself and your personality?
6. Why do you want this position, scholarship, or award?

Where To?

Please provide a list summarizing where the letters have to go and when they are due. If it is a paper form please provide me a printout and if it needs to be mailed I need a pre-addressed, stamped envelope (off campus). If an electronic recommendation, provide a submission link.

Time Frame

Please provide me with these materials at least 1 month (and preferably more) before your first recommendation is due. I get many requests for letters, I need that long to make sure I can get it done on time and write a good letter. You will not want a letter that is rushed. I cannot honor letter requests that come at the last minute unless there is a special circumstance and my schedule allows me to accommodate that request.