

Tips for requesting letters of recommendation

As you continue your path beyond an undergraduate degree by applying to graduate school or getting a job, you may be required to submit letters of recommendation from faculty. In Rady's continued commitment to your academic and professional success, we want to provide you some tips and guidelines for how to best approach the process of requesting a letter of recommendation.

Before your request:

- **Conduct yourself professionally when communicating with faculty at all times.** Sometimes, faculty may refer to previous email communication with the student to jog their memory, especially if it has been a while that you took their class.
- **Take advantage of our faculty's expertise by visiting their office hours.** This is of special importance if you have plans to attend graduate school. In addition to gaining insight about your instructor's experiences, meeting with faculty helps create a rapport and helps them remember you better. In office hours, be mindful of your instructor's time as during midterm and final times, they may be trying to help multiple students. Aim for meaningful and relevant conversations.
- **Make sure you do well in your classes.** If you are finding the course challenging, going to office hours and showing improvement may help you create a lasting impression with faculty.
- **Participate in Special Studies Classes.** Classes such as MGT 198 and "Topics in" courses may allow you to get to know your instructor better, since the classes are smaller and the faculty may be more able to remember you. Independent research is also a great way to interact with faculty in a way that helps them to get to know you.
- **Give them a heads up.** If you have concrete plans to attend graduate school and you feel a faculty member has truly gotten to know you, you may want to approach them at the end of the quarter to inquire if they believe they could write a meaningful recommendation for you down the road.

Selecting an instructor:

1. **Select instructors that know you and can speak to your individual abilities.** When you get to select your recommenders, admissions officers expect you to submit a letter that is favorable to you. Receiving a letter from someone who gives a template letter for students they don't know may give them the impression that you do not have someone that can speak well of your abilities. Template letters or letters stating that they do not have anything remarkable to say may not be as favorable to you.
2. **Do not go for the big title.** A template letter from a high university official or a public figure may be less favorable to you than a letter written by an instructor or even a graduate TA who can better speak to your abilities.
3. **Try to match the requirements of the letter to the expertise of faculty.** Sometimes letters will ask your recommenders to speak about individual skills or your ability to perform in a certain environment. When your program is requesting a very specific skill such as public speaking or teamwork, it is best to approach instructors who saw you perform in that capacity.

Submitting your request:

- **Be professional.** When creating your request for your instructor, take time and put thought into it.
- **If you send an e-mail make sure you approach it as formal request.** Write your email as if you were writing a letter, and pay attention to punctuation and formality. Make sure you give as much information about the request. In the email requesting the letter of recommendation, make sure you include the following
 - Information about you. Keep this brief and relevant.
 - Information about the class you took with them including quarter and year and your grade. If there was anything special about your interactions with them, let them know. For example, if you led a team that outperformed the rest of your class, you should include that in your request to jog their memory.
 - Information about the program you are applying to and what the letter is requesting of them. Some programs will require them to answer individual prompts, while others may need them to fill out a survey.
 - A deadline. Generally, you want to make sure you ask with enough time in advance out of courtesy for the faculty member. Four weeks or more should be your goal.
- **Give them the option to say no.** In your request, you should always ask your faculty if they believe they could give you a favorable letter. Giving the faculty a sense of urgency by saying that they are your only option may lead them to write you a template letter. Remember no letter is better than a bad letter.
- **Ask them if they need more information.** Sometimes faculty may want to ask for your resume and your cover letter. Make sure you have them both ready to submit the moment they ask.

After they agree:

- **Make sure you give them a deadline.**
- **Follow up.** If your letter must be submitted electronically, make sure your instructor has received the link they need in order to upload the letter.
- **If the deadline is approaching, give them a gentle reminder.** Once again, remember to be professional.
- **Make sure you sign a consent form.** Due to FERPA regulations, your instructor may not be able to share certain aspects about your student file. You can find the Rady Undergraduate Programs Consent Form [here](#).
- **Send them a thank you email.** Instructors are driven by their wish to see students succeed. Once the process is over, thank them for their assistance, and if you were admitted to the program let them know!