

RECOMMENDATION LETTER

Etiquette

Some things to be mindful of when requesting letters of recommendations

PLAN AHEAD

Engage in as many rich experiences as possible (e.g., psychology majors are encouraged to be actively involved in research & internship) and keep records of these activities. Reflect as you go: record your takeaways & capture a story that you could tell about that activity at a later point. Save these artifacts to the cloud for easy retrieval.

THINK STRATEGICALLY

Think of who could best speak to your abilities (e.g., an instructor that you've taken for multiple courses). Imagine if you were the writer; what would you include? The better this person knows you, the easier it will be to write your recommendation. Explain why you chose to ask this person, specifically.

PROVIDE CONTEXT

Highlight other important information that tells your story (e.g., involvement in student organizations; serving in leadership roles; engagement in professional conferences; volunteering &/or community service; awards received) and relate it to the skills that you acquired along the way.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Be sure to ask your recommender for their support before filling out your application. It is important to give as much notice as possible (e.g., 1 month prior to the due date). Include your personal statement, resume/CV, & a PDF of your academic transcripts (highlight their courses).

MORE IS MORE

Provide details about the program you are applying to (name of program; program level: MA or MS, PhD, PsyD; address of institution). Illustrate that you've done your homework (e.g., in your personal statement, specify which faculty you would like to work with & why you're a good fit with that program)

FINAL DETAILS

"Waiving your rights to view the recommendation letter" will maximize the credibility of that letter. A friendly reminder about the impending due date a week or so before that date is completely acceptable. Keep in mind that you can submit your application while you are waiting for your recommendation letters to be submitted.

SHOW GRATITUDE

Students often have the impression that recommendation letters are simply form letters whereby faculty plug in their name and voila! This couldn't be further from reality. These letters take considerable thought as they are tailored to the individual student. Additionally, the writer is putting their name out there to vouch for your abilities. Show your appreciation by writing a thank you note, or email, and follow up to let this person know the outcome of this process. Doing so will increase the likelihood of their willingness to write you another letter in the future.