



Graduate School

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters are a crucial piece of your graduate school application. An effective letter should provide those making admissions decisions with an assessment of your potential as a graduate student and/or researcher.

It is important that a recommendation letter be written by someone who knows you well academically. Faculty members most commonly write letters of recommendation; however, other professionals who know you well and have supervised your work in academia or research may also be appropriate choices.

Although as an applicant you cannot control a letter's content or ensure your recommender submits the letter on time, there are things you can do to make the process as successful as possible. How you request a letter of recommendation influences the quality and type of response you receive from your recommender.

Tips for making your request:

- Ask to meet with your recommender(s) to discuss your desire to apply to graduate school. During the meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss your academic interests further, and request the letter of recommendation in person. Ask them if they are willing to write you a strong letter.
- Communicate with your recommenders about your goals for graduate study, your career aspirations, and how you chose your schools and programs.
- Give your recommenders a copy of your transcript and CV or resume. This helps them gain a better understanding of your background and interests.
- Provide your recommenders with the following information in a concise format:
 - *A list of the schools and programs to which you are applying, along with the deadlines and formats for submitting recommendation letters*
 - *A copy of your transcript and a list of relevant courses taken*
 - *Titles and abstracts of pertinent research papers you have written*
 - *Honors and awards received*
 - *Related academic and research activities (poster presentations, symposia, internship programs, etc.)*
 - *Copies of admissions essays*

- Give your recommenders at least several weeks' notice. You do not want your recommenders to be rushed; instead, you want to give them enough time to write a comprehensive and accurate letter.
- The Cornell Graduate School application utilizes an electronic recommendation letter submission system in which applicants provide the names and contact information for their recommenders as part of the online application. Recommenders then receive an email instructing them how to submit their letter.
- Check with your recommenders to make sure they submit the letter, but do not hound them.
- Anything other than a positive letter has the potential to harm your application. If a recommender denies your request for a letter, thank them for their consideration and find another recommender.

Make time to let your recommenders know the final outcome of your graduate school search; it is considerate and they will want to know.