

# Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are written evaluations of an individual's performance whether at work or in the classroom. You can gather letters of recommendation from instructors, advisors, supervisors, or anyone who has witnessed your abilities. If you will be using this letter multiple times, please direct your letter writer to keep the letter general and do not address the letter to anyone.

## **Choosing Your Letter of Recommendation Writer(s)**

- Be sure to ask individuals who will provide honest, candid, and positive recommendations.
- Ask professionals; do not ask friends or family members.
- Provide the individual an opportunity to decline your request by asking, "Would you be able to write a positive letter of recommendation for me?" It's important to ask this because some individuals may not feel capable due to not knowing you well enough, may not have the time, or may feel uncomfortable writing a letter of recommendation for you.

## **When to Ask**

The sooner the better, but at least two weeks in advance of a deadline. If you are planning to apply to graduate programs, you may want to let your letter writer know when you will be applying. In addition, many letter writers are not usually writing for just you. They may be writing letters of recommendation for other students at the same time, so keep this in mind.

## **After They Have Agreed**

- Have a conversation with your letter writer and discuss your career goals or your reason for wanting to attend graduate school or apply for a job.
- Tell them what you have been doing while in school and/or working.
- Explain the graduate program or position so they understand what you'll be doing.
- Inform them of what is valued in a candidate for the program or job you are seeking.

## **What to Provide**

- Resume
- Cover Letter or Personal Statement
- Any other helpful documents you provided to the school or employer
- Deadline for letter submission
- Transcripts (optional)

## **When You Accept Your New Opportunity**

Always follow up with your letter writer to share the exciting news after you have accepted admission to graduate school and/or a job. In your follow-up, thank them for supporting you in the application process by writing a letter of recommendation.