

Letter of Recommendation Worksheet

If you are a student of mine chances are that you might want me to write a Letter of Recommendation for you at some point. However, please consider the following thoughts before deciding whom to ask for Letters of Recommendation. Strong letters usually come from long and close relationships with faculty. Professors take these letters seriously, since we often write these letters to our colleagues at the same pool of schools and employers. Our reputations are at stake. Therefore, I generally write recommendation letters for two kinds of students:

- Students who took at least one course with me and excelled and wrote a strong essay in one of these classes.
- Students who wrote strong senior thesis or BA thesis with me.

If none of these apply, it is difficult to write a strong letter. After all, letters are usually explicit about how long we have known you, in what capacity, and how we rank you relative to your peers and our past students.

However, if some of these apply and you want me to write you a letter, that is absolutely fine. In this case, please answer the following questions and return them to me at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline of your application. If you want me to write several letters to various recipients, please fill out one form for each of them.

1. General information

- (a) Your full name

- (b) Who will get this letter?

(Name of university or company, name of department, street, city, state, ZIP code)

2. Classes

- (a) List all courses that you took from me, and when you took them.

- (b) Please describe a situation in one of my classes where your contribution was extraordinary (for example, situations in which you exhibited leadership skills, facilitating group work, etc.). The more specific you can describe the activity we did in class and how you contributed to its success, the better.

3. Essays

- (a) List the titles of all papers that you have written under my supervision.

(b) Of the papers listed above, which do you consider the best paper?

(c) What was the main research question of this best paper?

(d) Summarize the answer to your research question that you presented in this paper.

(e) Enclose a copy of this paper.

4. Motivation

(a) Tell me about your academic background with regard to this application. Over the course of your studies, which classes did you take that stimulated your interest with respect to this position? What classes taught you what you need to know for this position?

(b) Describe your real world experience that might be relevant for this position (work experience, internships, travels, etc.). What might demonstrate that you are truly interested in this position?

5. Logistics

(a) What is the deadline for this letter?

Note: Give me at least two weeks to write this letter. After all, good letters also take time to write. Last-minute requests will get last-minute effort.

(b) Your email and phone number in case I have questions.

(c) Enclose your CV

(d) Enclose your transcript with all grades

(e) If you are applying for graduate school or scholarships: Enclose your statement of purpose and your research proposal.

- (f) If you are applying for a job or an internship: Enclose a description of the job.
- (g) Enclose all necessary forms with your signatures. Please fill out the maximum amount of information on these forms.
- (h) Waive your right to read the letter (recipients often provide such a form).
- (i) If letter must be submitted online, make sure I receive the link from the submission system.
- (j) If letter must be submitted on paper, enclose stamped envelopes that are addressed to the respective recipient.