

REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

A letter of recommendation describes your personal qualities, accomplishments and experiences that make you well suited to a particular graduate program or position at an organization. A well written letter provides admissions committees and potential employers with information that may not be found elsewhere. It can also help explain or divert institutions and employers away from any weaknesses or lack of experience.

Seek experiences that will help you develop relationships with professors and other professionals. For graduate school, it is important for the admissions committee to see that you have done particular research and coursework that would speak to your ability to thrive in a more advanced educational environment. These opportunities are not only good for graduate school, but they help you build closer relationships with professors who can then vouch for your academic and research abilities. Regarding employment, hiring managers also want to see that past internship and job supervisors believe you have the work ethic and skills to thrive at their company. Get to know your supervisors so that they can speak to your personal qualities as well.

Understand that admissions committees and employers seek letters from specific types of professionals. Ask faculty, administrators, and supervisors who know you well and are in a professional capacity in which they can evaluate your qualifications for graduate study or a job. Your references should know your work and be able to provide examples to support their points. They should hold a positive view of you and be able to describe your potential for academic and professional work. Aim for a set of letters from several individuals who can describe your range of skills.

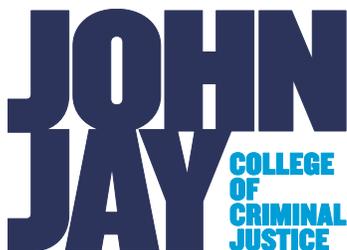
Look for these qualities in references. The best letters are written by faculty and supervisors from whom you have taken multiple classes and/or for whom you have completed substantial projects and internships. If you have received positive evaluations from these individuals, they would make great choices as references. Pick professionals who know your competencies, aptitude and personality characteristics well enough to convince a selection committee or hiring manager that you would make a strong candidate.

Provide references with the information they need to write a stellar letter. Include all of the information that you think may be helpful or that you would like to have appear in the letter of recommendation. (See the back of this page for questions you should answer when providing this information).

Allow sufficient time. Demonstrate respect for your reference's time by providing him/her with plenty of advance notice. At least a month is preferable, and less than two weeks is unacceptable.

Follow up. People get busy. Check in periodically to see if the recommendation has been sent or if they need anything else is needed from you. Follow up to ensure that your letter is sent, but don't make a pest out of yourself.

Thank your reference. Writing a letter of recommendation takes time and careful thought. Show your appreciation with a thank you note.



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
524 WEST 59TH STREET, SUITE L 72, NEW YORK, NY 10019
(212) 237-8754 | CAREERS@JJAY.CUNY.EDU | JJAY.CUNY.EDU/CAREERS



WHAT TO INCLUDE WHEN ASKING FOR A REFERENCE

When you ask someone to write a letter of reference, be prepared with the following information. Always send a copy of your resume and personal statement (if applicable).

GENERAL BACKGROUND

- What are you applying for, and why?
- When is the deadline?
- What is your weblink, email, fax number?
- What are your overarching interests and career goals? How does this opportunity fit in with them?
- What big theme do you want the letter to have? (i.e. perfect opportunity at this stage in your career, you have much to contribute to the program/position, etc.)
- What is your relationship with the reference? (i.e. If supervisor, what project /job/ internship? If professor, what class?)
- When did you first meet your reference?

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

- What is your major?
- List relevant academic experiences.
- What are your favorite classes? Why?
- Provide examples of academic achievements, successes and accomplishments that show originality and other qualities.

LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

- What are some of your relevant work, volunteering and internship experiences?
- Provide examples of professional achievements, successes and accomplishments that show originality and/or other qualities.
- Provide instances of strong leadership and/or other qualities of interest.

PERSONAL QUALITIES & STRENGTHS

- Provide examples of relevant attributes (i.e. perseverance, determination, oral/written communication skills, etc.)

ADDITIONAL

- Is there anything else you want your reference to mention?
- Is there an irregularity/shortcoming in your record that you would like your reference to explain?