

Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School

- Admissions committees rely heavily on letters of recommendation to present information about an applicant that cannot be conveyed through test scores and GPA.
- Most schools request 2-4 letters of recommendation.
- The letters should specifically address your application for graduate school (do not send general character references from family or community members).
- You should ask faculty, mentors or employers who know you and your academic achievements and capabilities well enough to write your letters of recommendation.
- You should provide those you ask to write letters with the following:
 - Your Statement of Purpose
 - Relevant background information such as your resume and significant life experiences.
 - Samples of academic work such as papers, research, etc.

Don't be afraid to offer prompts and to suggest areas of academic performance or special skills you would like your letter writers to discuss. You should let them know your career and educational goals. Give your recommenders as much guidance and information as possible—it will help them write better letters for you!

Letters of Recommendation Should Include:

1. How long and in what capacity they have known you
2. Your suitability for graduate school
3. Relevant academic research and/or work experience
4. Special skills relevant to your area of study
5. Your potential to succeed in graduate school and to make a contribution to your selected discipline

When Requesting a Letter of Recommendation:

1. Requests should be made in person, when possible.
2. Ask your prospective letter writer whether she/he feels they can write you a strong letter of recommendation; if someone you ask appears ambivalent or reluctant, ask someone else!
3. A good letter takes time, and faculty are usually very busy—approach recommenders about letters *at least* one month advance.
4. Indicate a deadline prior to the official one, and politely remind recommenders of the deadline a few days in advance.
5. Provide a stamped, addressed envelope and all appropriate forms.
6. **ALWAYS** send a thank you letter!

Ways to Develop/Pursue Faculty Contact:

- Courses
- Visit them during office hours
- Propose an independent study with him/her
- Participate in honors sections
- Internship or volunteer work with faculty

Source: UCSB Graduate Division at

http://www.es.ucsb.edu/curriculum_info/es190careers/pdfs/UCSB%20Applying%20Grad%20Sch.pdf