

# A Student Guide to Obtaining Letters of Recommendation

Most graduate programs require three to five letters of recommendation. These letters directly and specifically should support your application for admission to professional or graduate school. They should focus upon those areas that directly pertain to your potential to succeed in a graduate program or within a profession. Professional schools typically require three to five letters of recommendation. Whom to Ask For Letters

- Professors/Faculty Advisors
- Current or previous employers
- University administrators/staff

## Establishing Faculty Contact

Establish contact with your instructors early in your college career. A conscientious, deliberate attempt to know and be known by faculty members in your major field of study will bring about greater opportunities for obtaining substantive and contact, such as:

- **Course Selection** Consider selecting courses with small class sizes to maximize personal contact with professors and enrolling in subsequent courses offered by the same professor. If qualified, apply for departmental honors or research programs (if available in your major) to establish closer relationships with faculty. Opt for essay exams or extra work whenever possible to draw attention to your writing, research and initiative. And, of course, maintain strong academic performance.
- **Faculty Contact** Identify faculty members whose research interests or teaching areas align with your own. Reach out to them via email or in person. Attend their office hours and introduce yourself. Ask for advice on your academic and career goals. Request to be on their mailing list for updates on research opportunities and graduate programs. Ask for letters of recommendation when appropriate.

- **Teaching and Research Assistantships** Consider offering to become a teaching or research assistant for professors. Generally students have performed well in courses that they want to "TA." The possibility of becoming a research assistant normally depends upon faculty need for library or laboratory work by assistants, and/or upon available space in laboratories and adequate funding.

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