

Tips for Asking Professors to Write a Letter of Recommendation

If possible, choose a professor with whom you've had personal interactions.

- For example:
 - Did you sit in the front row or frequently contribute to discussions in a class you were passionate about?
 - Did you visit a professor during office hours to learn more?
 - Have you had any outside-of-the classroom interactions with any of your professors, such as academic advising, mentoring, research experience, etc?
 - You're likely going to have to submit your CV and/or transcript with your applications for summer research experiences, so make sure that your recommenders can say something personal about you that isn't reflected elsewhere, like your dedication and hard work to succeed in a difficult class, your ability to work well with others in class or lab, your passion for the field of study, etc.
 - You can choose to ask your recommender in person or via email. If you ask in person, make sure to give him/her the option of letting you know later (so he/she does not have to respond on the spot). If you ask via email, be sure to include information about yourself, a little bit about why you need a letter of recommendation, and why you chose to ask that particular professor (for example, did you demonstrate a particular skill or trait well in that professor's course?).

Ask if your professor feels like he or she could write you a strong/positive letter.

- Try to avoid simply asking your professor to write you a letter of recommendation—you want to be sure that your professor feels that he or she can write a good review for you. Also make sure that you give professors the opportunity to politely decline your request—you're better off getting a letter from someone who can write a positive review rather than a lukewarm recommendation.

If your professor agrees to write you a recommendation, make the process as easy as possible for him or her to write you a strong letter!

- You may choose to set up a time to meet with your professor or visit him or her during office hours so you can have a conversation with him or her about your goals for summer research experiences.
- Provide your letter writer with the information they need about you and about the programs you are applying to.
 - Consider giving them a folder with things like a summary, your CV, unofficial transcript, graded papers from a class you took with that professor, a short list of accomplishments or qualities you might like them to highlight about you, or anything else that might help them write you a strong letter. Always provide them with a simple table or list of the programs you are applying to and the specific requirements of each. See below for examples.
 - If letters must be sent via regular mail, include pre-addressed labels and a stamp for convenience.
- Ask for all of your letters by one "due date"—this keeps it simple for your letter writers, and relieves stress on you! Make sure to check your earliest due date, and ask that your letters be completed at least a day or two in advance.

***Here is how a summary for your information folder might look:**

**Request for Letters of Recommendation
For Summer Research Programs**

Letter Writer: Professor Name, PhD

Applicant Name: Your Name

Personal Contacts:

Fall 2012 Psychology 101, Section 1 (Final Grade: A)
Spring 2011-Present Psi Chi Advisor

I am applying to the following summer research programs:

1. Awesome Research Lab
2. Scientific Superstars Summer Program
3. Really Rad Research Program

Please submit letters by: XX/XX/XX

See attached for copies of:

- CV
- Unofficial transcript
- Graded papers from your class (if you have them)
- (or anything else that might help your letter writer create a strong recommendation!)
- Table with details about each of the programs I am applying to
- A brief list of some things about your performance in their class that they may want to note, i.e.,
 - Excellent attendance
 - Clearly attentive, sat in the front row
 - Frequent active participation
 - Supportive team contributor for group projects, received highest ratings from group members
 - Consistent “A” grades in class and displayed strong critical thinking skills on term-papers (as per your comments)

***Here is how a table about your programs might look:**

Summer Research Program	Brief Description	Requirements for Letter Writers
Awesome Research Lab	An 8-week research program focused on investigating a super awesome topic I'm interested in. This program also offers a GRE preparation course!	Letter must not exceed one page. Letter must be sent to: Dr. Iz Amazing Awesome Research Lab Best University Ever PO Box 123 Denver, CO 80202 *Address label and stamp enclosed.
Scientific Superstars Summer Program	A 10-week research program focused on another really cool topic. Students have the opportunities to learn about these great lab techniques. Students also learn how to create posters and get to present their findings at the Superstars Conference.	Letter must be submitted online at: www.website.edu
Really Rad Research Program	A 10-week research program focused on investigating the link between one really cool topic and another. Students in this program work closely with graduate students and faculty, and have the opportunity to deliver an oral presentation at a regional conference.	Recommenders must complete a brief online recommendation form, which can be found at: www.website.edu