

Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

When asking an individual to write a letter of recommendation, it is advisable to do the following to ensure you get the strongest recommendation letters possible both for now and in the future:

- 1. Start early.** Ideally, contact your recommender 3-4 weeks before the letters are due. Many individuals have busy schedules and you want to allow enough time for the recommender to agree to write a letter, and to write a strong letter. Rushing them might lead to a recommendation that is not as polished or as positive as it could be.
- 2. Choose well.** Request recommendations from those who know you, since they will be better equipped to write a compelling recommendation for you. Ask the potential recommenders “do you feel you know me well enough to write a scholarship recommendation for me?” This allows a person who feels they don’t know you well enough to decline to write a letter and potentially suggest a different individual, which is better than having someone write a generic letter.
- 3. Provide helpful information.** If possible, meet with your potential recommender(s) in person and provide some information to them. Specifically, provide information about the scholarship and the broad goals of the program, why you are applying for the scholarship and what you hope to accomplish through your education and career, your resume and/or curriculum vitae (CV), and a copy of your transcript. It is imperative that you provide accurate deadlines and procedures for how the potential recommender will submit his or her letter of recommendation. Follow up at least one week before the letter is due to check in and see if your recommender needs any additional information from you. If you have begun working on your personal statement, it would be advisable to bring this as well in order to solicit feedback.
- 4. Be gracious.** Follow up with your recommender(s) to thank them for their time and willingness to write letters on your behalf. This will let them know that you appreciate their efforts and will increase the likelihood that they will write another letter of recommendation in the future. When following up, it is advisable to send hand written thank you notes. If you are selected to interview for a scholarship, or are selected as a winner you will want to make sure your letter writers are aware of this as well.