

Letter of Recommendation Guidelines and Request Form

Psychology faculty members know how important letters of recommendation are for gaining employment and entrance into graduate school (including psychology programs, med school, law school, MSW programs, etc.). Thus, we want to spend time writing each letter to make sure it is the best it can possibly be. However, each year we each receive requests for letters from many students, and each student often wants 5-20 letters. To help us be most efficient, and to prevent mistakes, please read the following guidelines. Then fill out the table below and give it to each of your letter writers.

We also receive many requests to serve as job references. When applicable, follow the policies below for that process as well.

1. Think carefully about whom you ask for a letter of recommendation. Have you done impressive work for the instructor? Did you take two or more courses with this professor, or work in their lab, or have some other significant interaction with them? If not, it will be difficult for the professor to say anything meaningful about you. Consider only asking for a letter from a professor whom you know well and for whom you have done impressive work.
2. Request letters of recommendation at least 6 weeks before the deadline to ensure your writers have enough time; longer time is often needed during busy times of the year (e.g., the end of the fall semester when there are a variety of holidays, final exams, and other events).
3. Be mindful of the fact that professors can decline your request to write a letter for several reasons, including:
 - inadequate advance notification
 - insufficient experience with the student
 - too many requests for references already received
 - inability to write a strong letter (in this case, you should be appreciative and thankful that the professor was up front with you, as opposed to writing you a weak letter that could sabotage your chances for graduate work or employment)
4. Most schools will ask you if you want to waive your right to see your letters of recommendation. Most letter writers prefer that you waive your right because the letter will then carry more weight. You need to waive that right in writing, usually on the website for the organization or on a hard copy form you provide to the letter writer. Make sure you have properly addressed this matter before you give the materials to the letter writer or the writer will likely return everything to you prior to working on your letter.
5. If you are requesting letters that require hard copies to be mailed, provide your letter writers with stamped, addressed envelopes.
6. Provide a complete list of schools you are applying to when you make your request. It creates more work for your letter writer if you notify them of each school one at a time. Whenever possible, allow your letter writer to send in all the letters at once.
7. Letter writers want to know why you are applying to the programs you have chosen. Along with the table below, provide a copy of your CV/resume, personal statement, and any other documents that you think would be useful. You may also want to meet in person with your letter writers to explain to them why the program you have chosen is the best one for you.

Name of School	Name of Program/Degree and Track if applicable (e.g., child/adult)	Deadline	Letter submitted online or mailed?	Other notes (e.g., specific lab or professor sought as mentor?)