

# REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

To support diversity and equity in admissions, GSU's College of Arts and Sciences takes a holistic approach to application review. Along with your transcripts and personal (or goal) statement, letters of recommendation (LOR) are an important facet of how you present yourself to the program review committee.

**Through your recommendations, the admission committee should learn about your academic interactions, aptitude, and potential to succeed from those with whom you've had positive, relevant interactions.**

## TL;DR



- **Make your request, be professional and courteous**
- **Know whom to ask, check the guidelines**
- **Be time-conscious, give 6 weeks notice**
- **Guide your recommender, provide adequate information**
- **Be gracious, send a note of gratitude**
- **Send a respectful reminder, if necessary**
- **Know about your right to waive**

## MAKE YOUR REQUEST

**Approach asking for a LOR with professionalism and courtesy. It's best to ask face-to-face (in person or virtually) or by phone. If that is not an option, send an email.**

A generic recommendation can impact your admission consideration negatively. Use wording such as "Would you please consider submitting a supportive letter of recommendation, which speaks to my strengths and academic abilities?" Explain your interest in the desired program and how you're best suited to learn and grow at your chosen institution.

Phrase your ask in a manner that allows for the option to decline. Not everyone has the time or desire to submit a LOR. Remain gracious and thank those who decline to write a recommendation.

Before you contact prospective recommenders, familiarize yourself with the submission method. Tell your recommender whether the recommendation should be submitted online or through the mail. Snail mail is unlikely, but if that is the required method, provide your recommender with a stamped and addressed envelope.

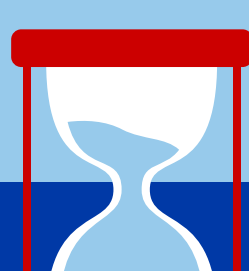
## KNOW WHOM TO ASK

**Ensure you understand the program's requirements so you know whom you should ask for a LOR.**

After reading the guidelines, decide if you will ask professors, a mentor, university advisor, lab or research supervisor, or employer. It's best to avoid personal recommendations.



As the recommendation is an opportunity for faculty or supervisor(s) to promote your achievements and likely success in a graduate program, give thorough consideration as to who can best speak to your strengths and meaningful scholarly contributions. Avoid asking someone who has cause to write a less than favorable recommendation.



## BE TIME-CONSCIOUS

**Give your recommender at least six weeks to submit their recommendation. Less than a month's notice is viewed as unprofessional.**

Being considerate of the professor's time shows that you respect and value their contribution to your success. Allow enough time for your recommender to consider your request, write, and submit your letter.

If it's application season, faculty may have multiple recommendations to write. Don't risk receiving a generic recommendation by requesting one at the last minute.

## GUIDE YOUR RECOMMENDER

**The more information you provide your recommender, the more likely they are to craft a persuasive letter.**

Beyond your grade, ask your recommender to include how they know you and remind them of a time you demonstrated leadership, teaching, or collaboration skills. Prompt your recommender by highlighting an assignment, research, or paper that best demonstrates your academic skills and for which you received positive feedback. Ask them to elaborate on your specific research or academic accomplishments and provide evaluative comments about your traits and accomplishments. **Don't be shy when discussing your achievements!** You can ask specific questions to guide the letter such as, "Describe when I took the lead in [xyz] project/presentation," using specific assignment details.

Be certain to provide personal information such as

- Your personal/goal statement to help your recommender understand how you present yourself to the admissions or review committee.
- Your updated CV/resume, including a list of honors, awards, recognitions
- Specific research projects, poster presentations, or conference papers
- Your writing statement or portfolio

Don't forget to outline practical information like:

- Program, degree, and university
- Deadlines and the submission instructions
- Your entire application if you feel comfortable



## BE GRACIOUS

**Show gratitude to your recommenders by sending a note of thanks; decide whether you'll send when the recommender agrees or once they submit.**

Once admitted, follow up with the recommender to convey your appreciation of their support in your academic goals, and stay in touch with them; some may be your colleagues soon, so you're also broadening your professional network.

Repay the favor! One day you may be approached to write a letter for a student or colleague.



## SEND A RESPECTFUL REMINDER

**If your recommendation deadline approaches without a submission, send a polite reminder.**

Remember to thank the recommender again for their support and remind them how and where to submit.

Most programs at GSU won't penalize you for a missing recommendation letter; however, it doesn't hurt to ask one more than the required number of recommenders just in case someone forgets or is unable to submit. It's better to have an extra recommendation than not enough.

## KNOW ABOUT YOUR RIGHT TO WAIVE

**When applying to GSU, you can opt to waive your rights to view your letters.**

If you choose not to waive your rights, ask the recommender if they are willing to share a copy of their letter with you.

Read disclosures on the applications and other documentation regarding entities collecting information about you to determine what rights of access you may have to information that is collected and maintained about you.



## ADAPTED FROM

Rice University: [Grad Applications 101: Getting Letters of Rec](#)  
Northeastern University: [How to Request a Grad School Recommendation Letter](#)

## QUESTIONS?



**[Contact the Office of Graduate Services.](#)**