

Whom to ask

Evaluate who can provide you with the strongest recommendation(s). Consider what kind of recommendation the application requires (academic or professional), and who can best write about your ability to contribute to and/or benefit from the opportunity for which you are applying.

How to ask

Explain why you have identified the individual as a potential reference writer, i.e. *“I am asking you for a letter of recommendation because we have been working so closely on the X project recently, and I think you have a good sense of my problem-solving skills,”* or, *“I am asking you to provide a reference, even though you know my recent work less well, because my past work with you is highly relevant to this opportunity.”*

For a reference who should simply be available by phone or email, notify the individual and ask for his or her agreement in advance.

When to ask

When possible, request written recommendations or references **one month in advance**. At a minimum, make this request two weeks in advance.

After submitting...

Inform your references as to the outcome of your application once the results have been announced. Thank them for writing for you!

Provide your recommender with all the necessary information required to submit the written letter or reference, including:

- ❑ Clear and complete submission instructions
- ❑ The name of the individual and department to whom the reference should be submitted, the mailing or email address, and/or all online registration and submission information
- ❑ Deadline for submission
- ❑ Your current resumé or curriculum vitae
- ❑ A description of the grant, fellowship, position, or other opportunity for which you are applying
- ❑ Drafts of any other application materials that you will submit – for example, your letter of intent or a description of your proposed research project
- ❑ Specific information that supports your candidacy for the opportunity – for example, special qualifications you may possess, or specific related activities you have conducted that were not supervised by the letter writer
- ❑ Specific skills or experiences you would like the writer to highlight, and/or important or unique contributions you will make to the institution or opportunity
- ❑ Remember when saving files to include your name in the file heading for clarity – i.e. “CandidateX-coverletter”