

How to Ask for a Recommendation Letter

A template email plus everything your professor needs from you.

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7 rules for a great recommendation letter

1. Ask 6-8 weeks before your first deadline.

Professors are busy, and rushed letters read rushed. Early asks get thoughtful letters.

2. Ask professors who actually know you.

A detailed letter from a lecturer who supervised your project beats a vague one from a famous name.

3. Ask for a **STRONG** letter - and mean it.

Saying 'would you be willing to write me a strong letter?' gives them a graceful way to decline, which protects you from a lukewarm letter.

4. Make their job easy.

Send your CV, SOP draft, bullet points about your work in their class, deadlines, and submission links in one organized email.

5. US schools want stories, not praise.

If your professor hasn't written US-style letters before, your bullet points with specific examples help enormously.

6. Waive your right to view the letter.

Schools trust confidential letters more. Always check the FERPA waiver box.

7. Remind, then thank.

Send a gentle reminder 2 weeks and 3 days before each deadline. When it's done, thank them - and tell them where you get in.

Copy-paste template email

Replace everything in [brackets]. Keep it short - professors skim.

Subject: Recommendation letter request for graduate school - [Your Full Name]

Dear Professor [Last Name],

I hope you are well. I am [Your Full Name], and I took your [Course Name] class in [Semester, Year], where I [brief reminder - e.g. earned an A / completed a project on X].

I am applying to master's programs in [Field] for Fall 2027, and I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to write me a strong letter of recommendation. I thought of you because [one line - e.g. your class shaped my interest in X / you supervised my project on Y].

The first deadline is [Date]. I know this is a busy time, so please feel free to say no if your schedule does not allow it - I completely understand.

If you are able to help, I will send you everything you need: my CV, my draft statement of purpose, bullet points about my work in your class, and the submission links for each school. US schools ask recommenders to submit letters directly through their portals, so I will make the process as simple as possible.

Thank you for considering this, and for everything I learned in your class.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

[University, Major, Graduation Year]

[Phone] - [Email]

Send this packet with your request

- Your CV
- Your draft statement of purpose
- Bullet points: your grade, projects, and specific moments they might remember
- List of schools, deadlines, and submission links
- The field you're pursuing and why