

Guidelines for Letters of Recommendation

Professors are happy to write letters of recommendations for students, but there are a few things to keep in mind to make sure that the letters arrive on time and are as positive as possible.

One thing that should be considered early on is that Rutgers is a big place and professors clearly do not know all the students in their classes. But professors almost always know a few students in each class, and one of them can be you if you do well on the exams, stop by office hours, and perhaps chat with the professor a bit before or after class.

Most students who are graduate-school bound have been involved in research, fieldwork, or internships to gain practical experience and to insure that at least one or two faculty members are familiar with their ideas, their reliability, and their ability to work in the field.

Professors have a moral and professional obligation to be honest in their appraisals of students. If you still owe the professor a paper, or crashed the lab computer, or have some other issue, you should discuss the impact of this with the professor when you inquire about a letter of recommendation.

Even with all of this, professors still find it useful to know more about you when they are putting together a letter of recommendation. The accompanying form will help you to supply some additional background information about yourself. To facilitate the whole process, you should bring the following materials when you visit your letter writer:

1. The attached information form.
2. A copy of your personal statement.
3. A stamped, addressed envelope for **each** school to which you are applying.
4. Although it is sometimes necessary to bring additional application forms at a later time, it is easiest for the professor if everything is in a single packet.

Do all of this at least two weeks before the first letter is due!

You have a legal right to see the letter of recommendation that is in your file when you arrive at a graduate program that accepted you. Or, you may waive the right by checking the appropriate box on each form. Most students waive the right because they feel that the readers of the letters will view them as being more candid and detailed if they know that the student does not have access to the contents. Maybe so, maybe not. Check whichever box you choose. Some professors routinely provide copies of their letters of recommendation to students even if they have waived their right to access.

NAME: _____ **PHONE:** _____

Email: _____

Information for Letter of Recommendation

[Note: You may not have all of this information or you may not wish to share some of it. Provide as much information as you can.]

I. The High School Years

High School (Name & Location):

Year of High School graduation: _____

Rank in High School class: _____

SAT scores: Math = _____ Verbal = _____

High School Awards:

High School activities:

Work experience:

Volunteer experience:

II. My Life at Rutgers

Present overall GPA: _____ (Please supply a copy of your courses and grades)

Major 1: _____

Major 2: _____

Minor: _____

GRE's: Verbal = _____ Math = _____ Analytic = _____ Psyc = _____

Please explain any unusually high or low GPA semesters and/or GRE scores.

What do you consider to be your strongest academic point(s)?

What do you consider to be your weakest academic point(s)?

List the academic awards, recognition, etc., you have received while a student at Rutgers.

What activities have you been involved with on campus? i.e., team or club memberships, offices held, etc.

What activities have you been involved with off-campus?

What work experiences have you had during college (including summers).

Please list all of your grades in the courses required for your major:

III. Who Am I?

Describe, in as much detail as possible, your interest in the field you have chosen to pursue. What first interested you in the field? Do you have any background and experience in the field? How do you know the field is right for you? etc.

Do you speak another language(s)? If so, how fluent are you?

What computer skills do you have?

What are your hobbies?

Graduate schools are usually looking for several pieces of information in letters of recommendation; especially comments about your academic abilities, research abilities, motivation, and character. Remind your letter writer of specific examples illustrating your strengths in these domains. Don't be shy about promoting yourself!

IV. The Actual Letters

List the faculty members whom you have asked to write letters of recommendation.

List the programs and schools to which you are applying, and the dates the letters of recommendation are due. (Be sure to supply an addressed and stamped envelope for each letter.)

DUE DATE	PROGRAM	SCHOOL
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Please supply any additional information that will help your letter writer.