

Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation, whether for employment or graduate school admission, are not the same as a **reference**. When asking someone to serve as a reference, you are generally asking them to field a few phone calls from prospective employers, and then discuss your work or academic performance.

When requesting a **letter of recommendation**, you are asking the individual to spend what will be several hours of time composing a strong letter of recommendation. Because you want to get the best letter of recommendation possible, it will benefit you tremendously to provide the writer with essential information.

Use the following tips to ensure that you ask the right people to write your letters.

- Develop strong relationships with the people from whom you plan to receive letters of recommendation. Sometimes this process takes many months or years, depending upon circumstances. Begin developing the relationships long before you need the letters! It is important that the writer know several facets about you: your character, your coursework, your initiative, and your communication skills. Keep them up-to-date on your achievements, either verbally or in writing.
- Determine who will be your best advocates. If you hear reluctance; complaints about not having enough time to write the letter, or not knowing you well enough or long enough - be ready to back off. If someone feels forced into writing you a letter, you can bet it will be less than glowing.
- Discuss the letter with the person writing it. Be sure to inform him or her of any points you would especially like to convey, i.e. why you are a good fit for this job, or why this particular program fits your educational goals. Ask him or her to use as many specific examples as possible.
- For graduate school admission, consider using the recommendation as a way to address negative information that was not addressed in the main essay, i.e. a bad grade or low test scores. The letter could also serve as the place for a small accomplishment that you did not include elsewhere.
- Be sure that the person writing the letter includes his or her contact information, particularly telephone numbers, on the letter. Admissions offices and employers will often call for more details. If there is a chance that the employer or grad school will call in the summer, be sure to include summer phone numbers, as many professors and coaches do not keep regular office hours during the summer.
- Give the person **AT LEAST one month** to write the letter.
- Provide the writer with all the information they could possibly need;
 - a description of the job you are applying for or
 - a description of the program you plan to study in graduate school,
 - a copy of your transcript,
 - a signed consent form allowing your professors/coaches/advisors to discuss your academic performance (available below),
 - a copy of your resume,
 - any necessary forms, deadlines, or other dates they need to be aware of,
 - and a STAMPED, pre-addressed envelope. Letters of recommendation can be confidential or non-confidential. The choice is yours. In some cases, admission and employment officials give more credibility to letters that you have waived the right to read.
- Let the recommender know when you plan to submit your application so they can send their letter at the same time.
- DO NOT use letters of recommendation from friends or relatives. When telephoned, the people who wrote your letters of recommendation need to be able to speak about your academic or work performance. Letters or references from friends or relatives may be viewed as biased. If your only work experience has been in a family business, try to find someone other than a direct family member to write your letter of recommendation.

Norwich University

A NOTE to STUDENTS and ALUMNI: In order to be in compliance with FREPA regulations, professors, coaches and advisors must receive this signed consent form from every student for whom s/he writes a letter of recommendation or serves as a reference, whether this letter/reference is for a prospective employer or graduate school admission.

Please bring this completed form with you when you meet with your professor/coach/advisor. Please ask him or her to ask you keep the signed consent form in your file.

Consent to Release of Education Records

I, _____, consent to the release of my education records, or discussion of particular projects, reports, records or grades, to my professors/coaches or advisors, listed below, for the purpose of writing letters of recommendation for me and/or for the purpose of serving as a reference for me with prospective employers and/or prospective graduate schools.

I understand that education records include, but are not limited to, information about my academic standing, disciplinary issues and financial obligations to the University.

I acknowledge that I may submit a subsequent notification in writing directing the University to no longer release information to any or all of the individuals listed below.

Norwich University is authorized to release information to the following individuals (please print clearly):

Name

Relationship to Student

Student/Alumni Name – please print

Class Year

Student/Alumni E-mail

Student A#

Student Mailbox

Phone Number

I have read and understand the information that I am releasing.

Student/Alumni Signature

Date