

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

OR

“The Reference Letter”



- Wed Based
- Phone Interview
- Written Letter (Most Descriptive)

Think you don't care?

“I don't need a letter for 3 years”

START NOW!

- Get involved in clubs, and other groups and activities;
- Be generous; organize note-sharing and study groups;
- The professors can see when a student is respected by others

Brochure by

**Dr. Kendall Martin and
Rita Ramirez-Levine**

Who do you ask?

- Follow up on your interests from lecture, Ask about relevant topics from your reading,
- Show that you care enough to make the course or activity real for yourself and others.
- Simply, be an INTERACTIVE student and BUILD sincere RELATIONSHIPS.

When do you ask? and Why?

- Give the person you are asking AT LEAST 2-4 weeks notice
- If you don't follow some of these tips, it can result in:
 - * Short/average letter
 - * Letter lacking input on crucial character

Initiative/Self-reliance	Clear, coherent written & oral expression
Critical thinking and problem solving	Reliability/Dependability
Accept constructive criticism	Conscientiousness
Ability to relate with others	Appreciation for diversity



Funded by:

National Science Foundation

William Paterson University

Academic Coordinator:

Dr. Danielle Desroches, Professor

Biology Department

973-720-2329

desrochesd@wpunj.edu

THE GS-LSAMP-MAPS PROGRAM

**Garden State
Louis Stokes Alliance for
Minority Participation**



WHEN YOU ASK FOR A REFERENCE,
WHAT ARE YOU ASKING?

You may need to use a professor for a reference when you apply for a position in another school or a place of employment. This shouldn't be an afterthought. It may damage your career if you haven't done the ground-work to get good letters.

There are generally three kinds of recommendations you would request: **phone interview** with your reference, **web form** filled out by your reference, and a **letter** sent by your reference.

These can be combined in various ways (e.g. web-form with an uploaded letter). But they have somewhat different functions:

The **web form or phone call** will ask for a ranking or evaluation of the applicant on specific character aspects that the institution finds important. This can include the applicant's performance in getting a good grade, but this is already in the transcript...

You can find these examples of common measures of character and suitability online:

https://www.minotstateu.edu/nursing/pdf/admission_recommendation_form.pdf

- ⇒ Honesty-Trustworthiness
- ⇒ Accountability
- ⇒ Concern for others
- ⇒ Social maturity
- ⇒ Punctuality
- ⇒ Problem solving ability
- ⇒ Respect
- ⇒ Ability to maintain Confidentiality
- ⇒ Interpersonal communication skills
- ⇒ Non-judgmental
- ⇒ Caring
- ⇒ Flexibility
- ⇒ Involvement in Community Service/ Organizations

This might come as a surprise because you've spent so much effort on getting good grades, but character is a big topic. So, if a student scrapes their way to a good grade by trashing other students and cutting corners, this kind of evaluation won't help them much. There is so much more than good grades that goes into finding the best applicant. You want to be portrayed as passionate about your field, a great team member and a paragon of ethical behavior.

The **Letter of Recommendation**, on the other hand, are less controlled by the institution the application is going to, but they have standard characteristics.

A good letter covers many aspects of the character of the applicant, as with the web form. But a letter also covers your character in a way that a web form cannot:

- creativity (unique & original)
- complexity (diverse skills)
- insight (connecting to the larger picture)
- passion (dedication & engagement).

If you got an A in a class but never interacted with the professor or produced any unique and memorable work, then the professor can write a favorable letter, but that letter will be short because there isn't much to say. A short letter, even if it is favorable, is not that useful. It can even be damaging to your prospects.

So, when you are considering a reference, think about how much they can say. Have you had the range of interactions that would give them material they can discuss in a letter or is it this an effort to turn a grade into a letter even though the professor barely knows you?