

Recommendations & References

- **Consider how many and what type (academic vs. "other") of letters you need for your applications:** Consult the graduate programs of interest to you to learn of specific program pre-requisites.
- **Discover the status of the letters needed (confidential or non-confidential):**
Typically, professional programs, and some graduate programs require, or prefer confidential recommendation letters, but it would help to ask the admissions office.
- **Look for special instructions on the application forms:** Are they requesting original signatures from recommenders, or specific forms to be used?
- **Plan your time accordingly:** Allow 6–8 weeks from the time you request the letter to the time you need to mail.
- **Ask for recommendation letters from those professors who know you best:** Don't go for recognizable "names" because they won't be able to write an informed letter.
- **Provide the recommender helpful information so they may write a well-informed letter:**
For example, a resume, writing sample, copy of a paper or work from that particular course. Be prepared in advance with an answer, in the event a recommender asks you what you would like to have mentioned in the letter.
- **Pay attention to detail and presentation:** Make sure documents submitted to graduate programs, credentials services, or employers are on plain white paper, as they may be electronically scanned. Flecked or tinted paper scans poorly and presents the reviewer difficulty in reading the text.
- **Write a thank you note to each recommender when your letter is received:** A hand written letter is more personal than an e-mail. It'll speak volumes to the person who has written your recommendation.

