**Guide to Asking for a Reference Letter**

First, if you do not ask me for a reference letter **prior to putting me on the form**, I likely will not notice the request for the letter from automated forms.  Many of these end up in my spam folder (at the UCCS or Gmail levels- depends).  Others I delete without noticing because I don’t recognize the subjects.  Emails become overwhelming- I get at least a hundred emails a day on a weekday, and it’s easy to miss things if I’m not watching for them.  I also may not agree to writing you a letter, given the points in the next paragraph.  **Ask me first.**

Second, I need some information before agreeing to write a letter for you.  See Guide #1 below.  I may not be willing to write a letter for you because I don’t feel that I can write a positive one, or it may not be possible for me to write the letter within the timeframe necessary.  You want a good, solid, positive letter, submitted by the deadline!  **Always ask first.**

(I’ve had this happen to me- the letter submitted was kind of positive… but overall, after I read it, it sounded like I was young, pathetic, but maybe had some potential… I certainly wasn’t getting the job/scholarship/extension based on that…Thus, this guide.)

Third, after I have agreed to write a letter for you, send me the required materials OR let me know that I should have received a request for the letter.

Fourth, see Guide #2.  This will help your letter writer write you a good letter.

Fifth, once a recommender agrees to write a letter and you know the needed information is in their hands, remind them about 2 days before the deadline that it’s due!

**Guide #1**

Email and get the recommender's approval **first before putting their name down as a reference** (This goes for all people including advisors, those who love you, etc... )

    a) State the purpose of the recommendation

    b) State how they will receive the notification (if there is one)

    c) State when it's due (If we don't know, we'll keep putting it off until we have spare time- which is, well, never.)

    Note that doing this protects you- you don't want a bad letter.  Give the person a chance to say yes or no.  A no could mean that they feel that they can't provide you a good letter or that they can't complete it in time.

See also Guide #2 (especially if you’re pretty sure the writer will say ‘yes')

**Guide #2**

After agreement or in the same email, make sure to include:

1) Who the letter should be sent to (names and address)- if it goes back to you, say this anyway, as much as you know, so we know how to address it

2) How to submit the letter (to you, by mail, by fax, by email, via a form, etc..)

3) What is the purpose of the letter

    a) Given the purpose (for example, if applying to an academic job), state what you want highlighted in the letter- should it be research? teaching? leadership?  In which area should the emphasis be (or even amongst categories)?

4) Remind the recommender of your interactions with them (from class, internships, research, etc...).  State classes, class project titles, and general ideas that were important to you that you want the recommender to remember (and maybe talk about).

5) Do you have a major project that the recommender was not really associated with that you want mentioned?

6) Remind again when it's due and how to submit.

Attaching a CV/resume can be helpful, but usually isn't necessary- the highlights of your resume that you want us to mention/are important to our letter should already be included in the above contents.

Best way to get a good letter, in my opinion:

1) **Write a template letter** with the information YOU want the recommender to include.  (Include address/contact to whom the letter is being sent as well).  Write this as though you were the recommender.  What would you want to see us submit?  Given this "template," we can go through and revise the letter to include our own personal ideas/reflections.  This saves the reviewer a lot of time, makes sure the key points you think we should emphasize are there, and overall helps you.

2) Also do 1, 2, 3, and 4 from above and include that in the email along with the example letter.

Given 1, 2, 3, and 4, the recommender can then go through your letter and personalize it given their interactions with you.