

## Asking your professor for a recommendation letter

Most professors are happy to write reference/recommendation letters for students. It is part of our job. And we have a rational self-interest in helping our students achieve success in their future endeavors, which raises the prestige of UVa-Wise and the Department of Business and Economics.

Please read and follow these guidelines as much as possible when requesting recommendation letters.

- Ask professors that are most familiar with your best work. If you earned less than a "B+" in my course, you will get a stronger letter from a different professor who is more familiar with your strengths.
- Allow at least two weeks for the professor to write your letter; three would be better. Professors are busy, just like you. And your professor will be able to write a better letter for you if he or she is not rushed. Giving the professor less than two weeks' notice tells him or her that you do not respect the value of his or her time.
- Complimenting the professor's teaching when asking for a recommendation may risk the appearance of being disingenuous. Professors do not expect or require compliments, and, like most people, find them meaningful when they are given without expectation of anything in return.
- Provide the following items, which will make it easier for your professor to write a stronger recommendation: a copy of your transcript (an unofficial copy is fine); your current resume; any papers or tests you took in the professor's class, with his or her grade & written comments; stamped, addressed envelopes if the professor will need to mail the letters somewhere.
- It will also help if you can provide some information about the school, scholarship, or job for which you are applying, including the selection criteria, if known. In many cases, a website address is sufficient.
- Provide clear instructions on what the professor is supposed to do with the letter. For example, many grad schools require that the recommendation letters be sealed with the recommender's signature across the seal, and then included with the rest of the applicant's materials. If the professor is supposed to mail the letter directly, provide a stamped, addressed envelope.
- All graduate schools and many scholarship and job applications give the candidate the option to waive the right to see the recommendation letter. I strongly recommend that you indicate on the appropriate form that you agree to waive this right. If you are uncomfortable doing so because you're not sure that the professor will write a strong recommendation, then you should ask a different professor.
- After you find out whether your application was successful, inform the people who wrote recommendations on your behalf. They put their valuable time and thought into writing the letter for you, they deserve to know the outcome.