**How to Request a Recommendation for College or Career\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

A letter of recommendation can make or break an application for college or employment. Knowing who and how to ask for a letter goes a long way.

Requesting a letter of recommendation is a big deal – one that plenty of people have ruined by not considering the needs of the person they are hoping will write a recommendation. Fortunately, a little effort and a little etiquette are all that is needed to properly request a letter.

**Choosing Who to Ask**

* DO ask people who have known you for several years (or at least for more than one class), preferably under a variety of circumstances (student, employee, club/church member, etc.)
* Do NOT ask people solely because they are well-known or powerful. For instance, a thoughtful recommendation from a teacher is better than a vague letter from a senator.
* Do NOT ask people whom you have let down.

**Knowing How to Ask**

Ask in person if possible. Hand them a short note explaining not only the request, but the context (admissions/school, scholarship, employment).

After the person has agreed to write the letter of recommendation, provide him or her with supporting documentation (see below) and a short reminder/thank you note.

Give the recommender plenty of time (at least a month is possible). If the person has not told you the recommendation has been sent, send a polite reminder a week before the deadline.

**Providing Basic Information**

Make the recommender’s life easier by providing all the necessary information. Ask if electronic or print materials are preferable. Include:

* The requester’s contact information
* The name, title and address of the person who will receive the letter
* Any guidelines mentioned or specific documents provided by the college/internship/company
* A current resume or CV\*
* An example of pertinent work (like a research paper or art portfolio), if relevant
* A pre-addressed, stamped envelope for sending the letter
* A deadline for writing the recommendation

**Ghost-Writing a Letter**

People will sometimes ask that the first draft of a letter of recommendation be written for them. This is perfectly acceptable – so long as the person sees, approves (and, usually, edits), and signs off on the letter. This [letter should be written](http://teachertipstraining.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_write_a_letter_of_recommendation) just as if the actual recommender was doing so.

**Sending a Thank You Letter**

Saying thank you for a letter of recommendation is important. First, it is the right thing to do. After all, the other person did not have to write a recommendation, but was doing you a favor. Second, a person might need to ask someone for more than one letter, so it is a good idea to stay in that person’s good graces. A thank you letter (not an email – although an email is better than nothing) should be sent promptly, but it need not be detailed. A couple of sentences should suffice:

*“Dear NAME,*

*I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate the letter(s) you recently wrote for me. You have been a wonderful teacher/employer, and I am truly thankful for your support as I begin this next stage in my life.*

*Thank you once again.*

*Sincerely,*

*Name.”*

The thank you can reflect a specific relationship – formal or humorous. Also remember that one of the best “thank- you’s” anyone can give is letting the recommender know the outcome of the application.

In short, people should be **polite**, **informative**, and **timely** when asking for letters of recommendation, sending reminders, and giving thanks.

\*Basically the primary differences between a resume and curriculum vita (CV) are the length, what is included and what each is used for. A resume is a one or two page summary of your skills, experience and education. While a resume is brief and concise - no more than a page or two, a Curriculum Vita is a longer (at least two pages) and contains a more detailed synopsis with specific examples to support each statement.  
A Curriculum Vita includes a summary of your educational and academic backgrounds as well as teaching and research experience, publications, [presentations](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_CV_and_when_should_you_use_a_CV_instead_of_a_resume), awards, honors, affiliations and other details. In Europe, the Middle East, Africa, or Asia, employers expect to receive curriculum vitae. A curriculum vita is used primarily when applying for academic, education, scientific or research positions. It is also applicable when applying for fellowships or grants.