

How to Request a Recommendation From Me

I'm very happy to write a letter of recommendation or serve as a reference for you! It's part of my job, and a part that I relish because I like saying nice things about people. However, I require a few things of recommendation requestors to make sure that I can make strong recommendations and that I don't forget to finish one.

I have instructions below for the two most common kinds of requests I receive: job references and graduate school letters of recommendation. If you would like a reference for something else, feel free to ask with these ideas in mind.

1. Ask if I'll write you a letter of recommendation. This ask is an opportunity for us to discuss how strong a recommendation I can produce and to figure out what experiences I can write about, so it's a very important step. I prefer you to ask in person so that we can have a follow up discussion about recommendation right away, but feel free to ask by email if you find me intimidating or can't chase me down.
2. Send me a follow up email reminding me of the conversation. Depending on the recommendation you're asking for, the follow up email should contain different things.
 - a. For job references – Tell me what the recommendation entails. For instance:
 - i. Am I expecting a phone conversation with your interviewer?
 - ii. Will they email me or are you setting it up?
 - iii. Do I need to write a letter?
 - iv. If so, how long should that letter be and what should it be about?
 - v. Where do I submit the letter, and will I receive an email prompting me to do so?
 - b. For graduate school letters – I am familiar with the graduate school application process and don't need much guidance about the letter the schools are seeking. However, I have a few requests when you're filling in the website request forms.
 - i. Make it easy for me to fill out the recommendation by pre-filling my contact information where possible. Use my office phone (909-607-8537) and my HMC email (mspencer@g.hmc.edu).
 - ii. If you are worried about a letter deadline, then send me a personal email or see me in person. Most automated reminder emails get filtered.
 - c. For any recommendation – Give me helpful reference material.
 - i. Send me your resume, and tell me what projects, mentoring experiences or classes you'd like me to discuss in my recommendation.
 - ii. If you're hoping that I'll complement your statement of purpose or cover letter in a specific way, then send it to me and let me know what you're hoping for.
3. Fill out the Google form at <https://goo.gl/forms/YXRK235dJwoyM2E32>. This form automatically populates a spreadsheet which helps me to keep track of all of the letters of recommendation I need to submit. Make sure to fill it out accurately, especially the due date. If you don't fill out the form then I am likely to forget your letter! Be sure to only fill out this form after we've talked about what letter I'm going to submit.
4. Don't surprise me: please submit all requests at least a month in advance. I often don't get to submitting letters until the deadline is on top of me, but I will almost certainly drop the ball if requests are added to my pile at the last minute. If possible, submit all of your recommendation requests in a batch so that I can keep track of them easily.