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/YXRK235djwowyM2E32](https://goo.gl/forms/YXRK235djwowyM2E32). 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.