



CAREER & INTERNSHIP CENTER

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Division of Student Life

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?

An aim of law school admissions is to identify applicants who are not only intellectually fit, but also those who have the personal characteristics and passions to thrive in a law school environment.

Because of this, applications are often looked at holistically, meaning they take into account many different factors from your GPA, LSAT, and personal statement, to your letters of recommendation (LORs).



WHO CAN I ASK?

Essentially, law schools want to know how you will perform in a law school classroom, so gathering LORs from academic sources such as **professors** can indicate to law schools how you have performed in undergraduate settings. Because of this, these types of letters are generally preferred.

You may also wish to supplement your academic letters of recommendation with a letter from a **professional** who can highlight other characteristics that you demonstrated during a job or internship.





HOW SHOULD I ASK?

If possible, asking someone to write you an LOR should be done **face-to-face**, whether that be in person or through a virtual platform like Zoom. If that is not an option, you can also set up a phone call with the person you are asking.

Having a personal conversation gives you a chance to impress your recommender, show off some of your communication skills, and also make sure that they have enough information from you to successfully write a positive letter on your behalf.



WHEN SHOULD I ASK?

It's recommended that you contact your letter writers approximately **2-3 months before you start your application**. This will allow them ample time to draft their letter and/or have a follow up conversation with you, if they need.

It can also be beneficial to provide your recommender with a deadline that is 2-4 weeks prior to the formal application deadline. This helps provide wiggle room for both you and your recommender if they happen to get busy.




WHAT IF THEY SAY NO?

Remember that letters are written on a voluntary basis and there is the chance that they may decline. If you're sensing reluctance from them, or they answer no, it is important to be respectful and not push them to write one anyways. You want your letter to be a positive reflection of you and your abilities, so you want letters from people who will enthusiastically support your application.



WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE WITH MY REQUEST?

To help your recommender write a strong letter, provide them with...

- your resume
 - your **personal statement(s)**
 - some of the **skills, experiences, accomplishments, and/or behaviors** you want your recommender to highlight (preferably talked about in person, but can also be shared in a letter to your recommender)
 - how or **where to submit** the letter
 - **the deadline** for submitting / your expected timeline to apply
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CORE SKILLS, VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, & EXPERIENCE TO CONSIDER

- Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing and Editing
- Research
- Exposure to the Law
- Organization and Management
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice
- Relationship-building and Collaboration
- Background Knowledge
- Oral Communication and Listening



NEXT STEPS

After your letters have been submitted, make sure to send a thank you note to your recommender. LORs are written voluntarily, so thank them for the time and effort they put into it.

Also, keep your recommenders updated on the outcome of your applications and share your final decisions with them on where you choose to attend or whether you intend to apply again next cycle. It can be a special experience to help someone apply to law school, so keep them in the loop!

