# Letter of Recommendation Request Guidelines
# Created by Tim Zimmerman, June 2017

## Table of Contents

Please use this guidance when asking me (or anyone else) for a letter of recommendation. Employers, graduate program selection committees, internship application reviewers, and grant funding reviewers _take letters of recommendation very seriously_, often giving them greater weight than other criteria such as academic performance. Read this document carefully and follow the guidelines with attention to detail.

I take writing letters of recommendation very seriously. My reputation as a professional in my field and as a professor, hinge upon the honesty and accuracy of my letters. You should only ask someone to write a letter for you if you know they are willing to speak highly of you and your abilities. It's completely fair for you to ask a letter writer "would you be willing to write me a strong, positive letter of recommendation?" This lets you know what to expect in that letter. I have told students "I can write you a letter but it will not be a strong letter because … ."  Then the student can decide if they want me to write the letter or someone else. **Again, this is serious business and you should not take this aspect of the application process lightly**.

Of course, contact me (tzimmerman@hampshire.edu) or schedule a meeting with me if you have questions or concerns.

## What I need from you (see details of each item below)

1. ***The name AND title of person to whom I should send my letter.***
2. ***The name of the organization <u>AND</u> the department or program to which you are applying***.
3. ***Method of submission and associated details***.
4. ***The Deadline***.
5. ***Send me copies of your paperwork.***

## When you should get me all of the above items

I receive on the order of <u>*10-20 requests for letters of recommendation each semester*</u>. This is a TON of work. So, I need lots of lead-time. Therefore, I need all the above listed materials ***<u>at least 3 weeks PRIOR to the deadline</u>***.  I realize this is impossible in some cases.  In those cases, I need these materials <u>AS SOON AS YOU KNOW</u> you will be applying but this should be the exception not the rule.

## What you can expect from me

Give my workload, your letter will likely be sent at the last minute. And, since I have so many requests, so I need you to remind me, by email or in person, as the deadline nears. I might get it done sooner (as long as I have the above information) but please remind me.

Once I have submitted the letter, I will email you and let you know.

## Detailed Guidelines for Each Item Listed Above

### The name AND title of person to whom I should send my letter

I need the <u>*name and title*</u> of the person to whom I should write my letter. For example, Christene DeJong, Director of Education.

### The name of the organization <u>AND</u> the department or program to which you are applying

I also need the <u>*name of the organization and the sub-unit (e.g., Department).*</u> For example, World Wildlife Fund, Marine Protected Areas Team or University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Education.

*If there is a specific program to which you are applying, I need the name of the program as well.* For example, Save the World Internship Program or Masters and Credential in Science and Mathematics Education (MACSME) program.

### Method of submission and associated details

*I need to know the method of submission (email? snail mail? online system?) PLUS the details (email address, etc.) for submitting my recommendation.* Please tell me how I should send in my letter. Should it be done by U.S. mail? Can I email it? Must I do both? Is there an online system I must use? Be specific.

I also need details for whatever the method. Some organizations have very strict requirements such as: submit a hard-copy letter in a sealed envelop with the recommenders signature hand-written across the seal, or email a pdf document only.

***In most instances, if it's not done to their specifications, the letter will be rejected and your application will not be considered. Take this seriously!***

### The Deadline

Tell me the *exact* deadline. Sometimes, the deadline is very specific (e.g., June 1 by 5pm East Coast Standard Time).

### Send me copies of your paperwork

You must send me the paperwork you'll be submitting – I need to see those *BEFORE* I write my letter. For example, for a job it might be your resume and a cover letter. For a grant application, send me your proposal, your budget, etc. For graduate school, you'll need a Personal Statement and a transcript.

## Typical criteria organization ask letter writer to address

Just so you are aware of the criteria often used in applications, here are the criteria the Hampshire College GEO office requires I address.  These are typical.

- Have you met with the student to discuss the above program and how it might relate to Division II or III academic work? *
- Have you met with the student to discuss the above program and how it might relate to Division II or III academic work?
- Have you met with the student to discuss the above program and how it might relate to Division II or III academic work?

- Have you met with the student to discuss the above program and how it might relate to Division II or III academic work?

What are the strongest skills and attributes the applicant has to offer this program?

|  |
|---|
|  |

What skills and attributes does the applicant need to work on?

|  |
|---|
|  |

Please assess how this experience would contribute to this student's Division II/III progress.

|  |
|---|
|  |

Evaluations
- To what degree does the applicant exhibit the following qualities?: (0-5 scale)
0-Stars = Not Able to Observe
1-Star = Below Average - Bottom 50%
2-Stars = Average - Top 50%
3-Stars = Above Average - Top 25%
4-Stars = Excellent - Top 10%
5-Stars = Exceptional - Top 1%
Initiative
Leadership
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Flexibility ß
Ability to listen
Works as a team
Independence
Respect for other cultures / ways of living

- Do you believe the student is a good candidate for this program?
- Do you believe the student is a good candidate for this program?
- Do you believe the student is a good candidate for this program?
- Do you have any concerns about this student participating in the program?
- Do you have any concerns about this student participating in the program?
- Do you have any concerns about this student participating in the program?