

# Guidelines for Students Requesting Recommendations

Faculty members see the writing of recommendations as a necessary, important, and very often enjoyable part of their profession. To ease what is often a demanding task, however, students can help by following certain guidelines.

1. Please make an appointment to request a recommendation of a professor. The writing of recommendations is an important piece of work. It deserves more at every stage than shoddy treatment. Furthermore, it may be the case that a given professor does not feel qualified to provide a particular kind of recommendation and in such a situation needs the opportunity to say so.
2. When providing recommendation forms for a professor, you should write a short (one page) personal biography/resume. Any recommendation will be more effective if an instructor can personalize it with telling details. The personal biography helps meet that goal. In it you should state your interest in physics and/or astronomy. Furthermore, you should mention your motivation and interest in the position you are applying to (graduate school, professional school, teaching position, staff position, etc.). Why do you want to do this thing? What personal qualities have prepared you for it? You would be wise to provide some examples of the importance of physics or astronomical studies in your own life. On a separate page, you should list all the courses you have taken in the department, with dates they were taken, with instructors, and with grades received. The recommender has to be able to identify and speak to your general ability as a student of physics and or astronomy.
3. If you have questions about waiving access to the recommendation, you should discuss the matter with the professor.
4. You should make sure that application and recommendation forms are filled out properly. Lapses here may jeopardize your application.
5. You should include information regarding deadlines for applications or filing dates. Please make the date for *each* recommendation clear and obvious.
6. You should include all necessary envelopes, completely addressed, and bearing appropriate postage.
7. You should allow at least three weeks between the request for a recommendation and the deadline for its submission.
8. Courtesy suggests that you notify the professor of acceptances received and of the final choice made.

Students who observe these guidelines will see to it that this important task is not only accomplished, but accomplished in a way which allows the professors to find some pleasure in it.