

# Considerations for Students Requesting Letters of Reference

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## Context

I'm glad to write recommendation letters for students who shine and with whom I've built a strong connection. However, I will need to be confident that we can make a strong case for your candidacy. Otherwise, I may suggest that you explore other options. **Here are some questions to guide you.**

## Our Relationship

If you're thinking of asking me to be your referee, the best chances come when we've had a meaningful relationship beyond just a single course. Merely enjoying my class won't cut it. A history of positive engagement in multiple courses, or collaborating on extra-curricular or research activities, really helps.

- Which courses of mine have you taken?
- How long have we known each other?
- Do you often attend my office hours?
- Do we share a good working rapport?
- Have we ever collaborated outside the classroom? (e.g. research, art, or community projects)

## Your Goals

Reviewers look for applicants with well-defined goals. If your vision is both clear and engaging, I'm all in to support you.

- Why are you drawn to grad studies?
- What's your main/overall objective?
- What are your more specific aims?
- Is your statement of intent strong & clear?
- Does your CV back up your aspirations?

## Your Strengths

Grad school is tough, and I need to be sure you're up for the challenge. If you've demonstrated a track record that highlights relevant strengths, I'll be happy to vouch for you.

- What makes you a strong candidate?
- What specific strengths can I highlight?
- Did you earn good marks in my classes?
- Can you share a current transcript?
- Is your academic integrity record clean?

## Schools and programs:

Choosing the right grad program is a big deal, and each application should be tailored to that school's specific needs. Being vague won't do—you need a clear strategy for each application.

- How much planning have you done?
- What programs are you eyeing and why?
- Do you have a unique pitch for each one?
- Do you meet the grade requirements?
- What's your application timeline?
- Can you provide the program's website?
- Does the school have an electronic process/portal for reference letters?

## Final Thoughts

I hope this has been a helpful reference. I welcome your feedback and questions. If you'd like to discuss graduate studies, send me an email or book a drop in session. Journey well!