Successful Strategies for Acquiring Strong Letters of Recommendation

The Writing Center
Why Letters of Recommendation?

- A Hiring Story
Who Should I Ask for LoR?

- Someone who knows you well
- A professor in a class that you were successful in related to the field you are applying for
- Someone who has earned the degree you are seeking in your graduate work
- Someone with an advanced degree who has supervised you in some capacity
- Someone who has had to evaluate you academically or in another position
Do not ask for LoRs from friends or family members!
http://go.osu.edu
/lorrequest

How to Ask for a LoR: what do you notice?
How to Ask for a LoR

- Asking in-person v. e-mail
  - Pros and Cons
  - In-person: more formal, less likely to get lost in the shuffle, may be awkward if they say no
  - E-mail: Person being asked may feel less obligated to say yes (which can be a good thing)
- “Do you feel you know me and my work well enough to write a good letter?”
- Think about how well that person knows you
- Think about what you want them to focus on/write about
Be mindful of how much time you are giving them to write the letter!
Materials Checklist

- Cover Note that includes:
  - How to get in contact with you
  - A list of schools to which you are applying
  - What you would like emphasized in the letter(s)
  - Links to or information on where they can submit the letter(s)
  - Due dates for the letters with the earliest date on top
  - Any other relevant information
  - Open and close your note with thanks, acknowledgment that the letter writer’s time is valuable, and how the letters are important to your professional future

- Recommendation forms
- Your unofficial transcript(s)
- Your personal statement
- Any relevant work you had from your experience with them (e.g., a graded essay)
- Resume/CV
A Strong LoR answers the following questions...

● What is your relationship with the applicant?
● Why should the graduate faculty listen to your opinion?
● What makes this student special?
● What specifically did this student do to impress you?
● What makes this student qualified for graduate school and this program?
● What do you know about the program the student is applying to?
LoR Template

1. Greeting to the recipient
2. Opening paragraph: position, relationship to the applicant, general assessment of applicant
3. Positive skill or trait, evidence/anecdotes
4. Repeat above as necessary
5. Repeat above as necessary
6. Clear recommendation of the candidate to the specific school or program
7. Closing line, polite offer to be contacted as needed
Questions?

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