

Letters of Recommendation: A proper "How To" guide.

Build relationships with potential writers.

Congratulations - you found a great opportunity that you need a letter for.

➔ **Now how do you ask?!**



Start now - BEFORE you need a letter.

Use your college time wisely: thoughtfully cultivate relationships that may result in strong recommendation letters.

- Set goals around what you want their letter to say.
- Concentrate on honing skills that you would like discussed in letters.
- Start with your research mentor!

Choose your writers carefully.

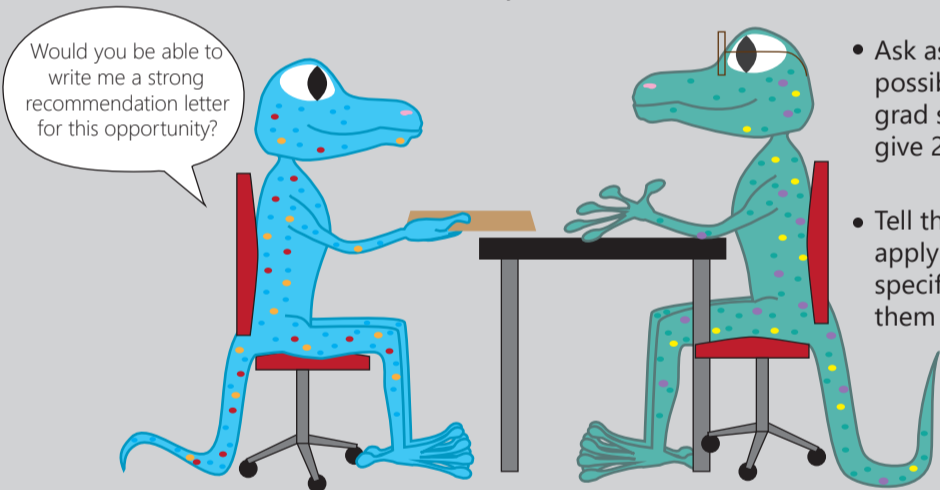
You are a great, well-rounded individual. Letters of Rec show this. Each writer serves to discuss specific attributes.



Ask your potential letter writers.

You know whose letter you want, now ask them. Actually ask them. In person or via email. It doesn't matter - just ask!

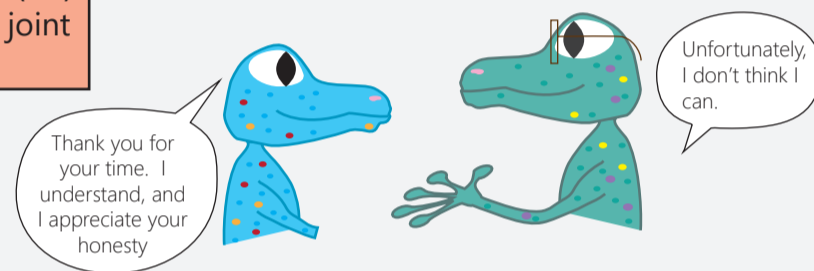
- Prepare a packet to give each potential recommender:
 1. List of applications, due dates, website links, and submission instructions.
 2. Your transcript, CV or resume, and personal statement draft.
 3. Any work you did for them (papers, projects, etc) that includes their comments.
 4. Draft of your research proposal.
 5. List of other writers (so they know what to write about).



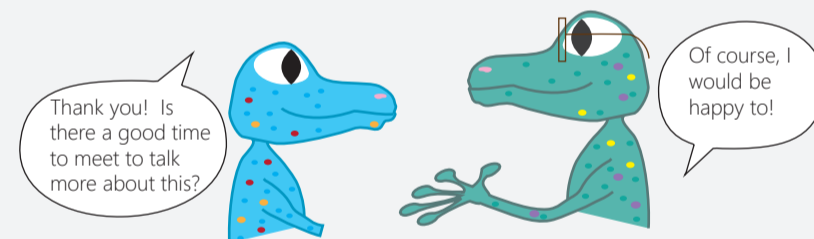
Unless specifically prohibited, it is okay to ask a "team" (2+) of writers for a joint letter.

Say "Thank you!"

Thank the writer, regardless of their answer.



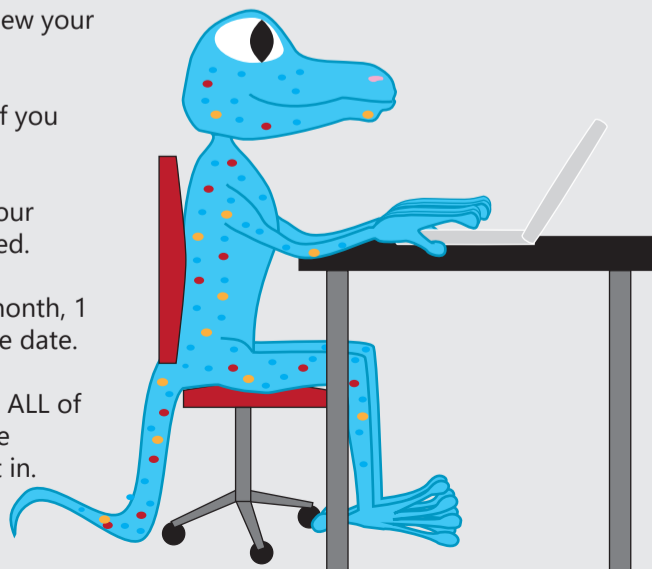
If they say yes, and you have not yet met in person, find a time to do so - if possible.



You have your writers!

Everything is lined up. But don't forget about your writers. While you wait...

- Always waive your right to review your writer's letter.
- Let writers know immediately if you withdraw.
- Verify with the program that your recommendations were received.
- Send (gentle) reminders at 1 month, 1 week, and 1 day before the due date.
- Don't panic - many writers use ALL of the time they have. If you have reminded them, they will get it in.

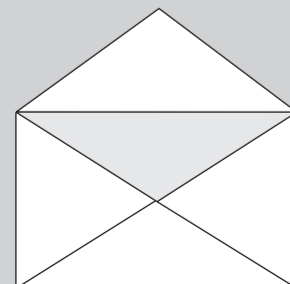


Afterward

You are not done yet. You may need another recommendation from your writer in the future, so make sure to keep in touch.

Send your writer a "thank you" - a short, handwritten note goes a long way.

Let them know the outcome of your application. They really do want to know.



Dear Professor Gecko,

Thank you for taking the time to write a recommendation letter for my recent application.

Great news - I got into two of my top five program choices! It will be a tough decision, and I would love to hear your opinion sometime.

Thank you again! I appreciate all of your help.

Sincerely,
Lizard