

## TIPS ON GRADUATE SCHOOL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

**Before you ask: assess how well you really did in the referee's class(es).**

- Did you get an A+, A, A-? If you got a C or even a B, the professor will probably not wish to write a letter.

**Choose persons who know your work reasonably well.**

- Get to know your instructors before the grad school application process is upon you – visit them in office hours, volunteer to help with library or other research, ask about lab internships, or an independent reading course on a topic of mutual interest, stemming from an Upper Division class.
- Graduate and professional schools want to learn about your academic abilities, so instructors are your best referees.
  - Teaching assistant letters are not preferred.
  - Instructors in smaller advanced classes (senior seminar, lab), independent study, in more than one larger class, or for whom you worked, are best.
- One CRM employer, if you did draft report writing or advanced analysis, is possible.
- One field school director with an academic post may be acceptable, if s/he knows your academic potential well and is in a well-ranked institution. (But not both of these.)

**Contact potential referees early in the process.**

- Remember: Any potential referee has the right to say “no,” so start early.
- Faculty may be able to steer you toward those programs especially suitable for your interests, or to other people on campus who may be able to do so.
- They'll tell you what supporting materials they want, if they agree to write a letter.
- Some might be willing to give you feedback on your draft statement of purpose.

## HELP YOUR REFEREE WRITE YOU A TIMELY LETTER

- **Ask well in advance of the due date for your materials.** Everyone is very busy, and most application deadlines coincide with ends or beginnings of terms. Three months ahead is not too early. Asking for letters to be written in two weeks or less tries the patience of saints.
- Provide your referees with a **packet of materials, preferably in a manila envelope with your name on it** (a bright color helps the harried professor find it amidst their papers). This should contain:
  1. **A coversheet with the names of all graduate programs to which you are applying, and their application due dates** (listing them in due-date order helps), whether their applications are online, paper forms, or only require a letter on departmental letterhead, whether the letter should come to you, etc. Include your best contact email.
  2. **Your actual application materials:** recommendation forms from the programs.
  3. **An addressed, stamped envelope for each program that requires a mailed-in recommendation.** The University of California does not support postage for letters of reference. If the program requires that you gather all letters of recommendation into your packet, say so on the coversheet, give the faculty a deadline date for your receiving their letter (≠ institutional deadline for you to submit the application), and provide an addressed envelope with postage for mailing the letter(s) to you.

4. **A copy of your statement of purpose.** This can be a draft, rather than the finished product. It helps the referee write a more focused letter on you and your goals. They might even give you pointers on the draft – another reason to submit your packet early!
  5. **Copies of your evaluations from all anthropology courses taken.** *Never submit official transcripts originals.* You can download evaluations from MyUCSC. This puts your work in context for the referee. Some will want all UCSC evaluations.
- **If you are accepted into programs, email referees to tell them where you were accepted, where you've decided to enroll, and thank them for their help.** Most professors are genuinely interested in their students, and they are really gratified to hear your news. This also keeps the door open for further letters of reference for fellowships, etc.