

Dear Student,

As a professor, it's exciting to hear about students' plans for scholarships or going beyond the bachelor's degree. It's likely that you are reading this now because you are looking into letters of recommendation from your professors.

When I consider writing a letter for students, I think about several pieces of information as part of my decision process so that I can write the strongest letter possible. Lukewarm letters are not going to be as helpful to you, so it's best to identify professors who know the most about you and can write very strong letters. If it turns out that I am not that person, I can help you figure out the best people to consider. Thus I ask all students to consider the following:

Questions that students should ask themselves when deciding to ask a specific professor for a letter:

- How does the professor know me?
- How did I do in their class? Would I be in the top tier of the class?
- Did I do my best work in their class? Would my performance stand out in a positive way? Did I actively participate in course discussions and activities? Was I regularly on time, professional, courteous, and honest?
- Did I routinely talk to the professor in office hours about the class or about my plans for the future?
- Is this the best professor to speak to my abilities, skills and/or potential regarding the position/program for which I am applying? Or is there another professor who knows me better?
- Did I allow for enough time for the professor to review my request and write a thorough letter before the due date?

Questions that I ask myself as I consider saying *yes* or *no*:

- How do I know the student? How did they do in my classes?
- How do their skills/objectives fit the description for the application (job, grad school application, fellowship)? Do they meet the minimum criteria?
- What is their experience? Is it relevant to the position/program that they're applying for?
- Can I speak to why they are a good fit for the position/program?
- Am I able to speak to specific examples where I've observed their expertise?
- If they've worked for me, did they do a good job?
- If I've given them professional advice in the past, did they follow through?
- Were they regularly on time, professional, courteous, and honest?
- Am I willing to put my reputation on the line for them?
- Do I have the necessary information, materials, and time to complete the request given the deadline?

It's always advisable to set up a meeting with professors to request a letter of recommendation. Schedule a meeting with me to discuss your goals and career plans, your work here at SJSU, as well as your timeline for your applications so that we can determine whether I would be the best fit for your letter of recommendation, or if there are better fits for your needs. I look forward to talking with you about your plans!

Below is a list of materials to include in a “Recommendation Letter Request” packet for graduate school applications, scholarships, jobs, or the like (some of the items may not be relevant for internships, scholarships, or job applications). **Provide hard copies in folders and e-versions of the following. I require the items at least 6-8 weeks before the due date so that I can write the most effective letter.**

1. Most recent academic resume
2. Bullet point summary list of your highlights/accomplishments/experiences you think would be important to mention in a recommendation letter and that may not be on a resume ("brag sheet")
3. Drafts of the application statements, letter of intent, essays, and/or other written materials you are submitting for each program you are considering. For advice on writing these types of documents see:
 - <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Writing%20a%20Personal%20Statement.pdf>
 - http://www.sjsu.edu/people/glenn.callaghan/grad_school/WRITING-A-STATEMENT-OF-PURPOSE.pdf
 - <https://career.berkeley.edu/Grad/GradStatement>
4. Spreadsheet/list of the schools and programs (or scholarships) you are applying to, including the due dates for letters, method of letter submission (website, hard copy, etc.), addresses, and pre-printed labels if regular mail
5. Information on each program (the application, links to their websites, a very brief summary of the key elements of the program you are interested in; other materials from their websites, etc.)
6. Instructions or forms for letter writers
7. Unofficial transcripts of your SJSU work and any other college work
8. GRE score if necessary for applications

Best,
Dr. DuCros

**The material in this document was developed based on my years as a student and professor, practices of colleagues and mentors, and adapted from some of these excellent online sources:

<https://rhayalab.com/2015/06/19/the-dos-and-donts-of-asking-professors-for-recommendation-letters/>

<https://renettatull.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/youve-just-asked-for-a-letter-of-recommendation-now-i-need-some-things-from-you/>

<https://readingspark.wordpress.com/about/letters-of-recommendation/>

<https://siuperformancestudies.tumblr.com/OfficeHours>