



HUNTER

The Human  
Biology  
Program

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# PRO TIPS: REQUESTING A RECOMMENDATION LETTER

*As you plan to continue your education or kickstart your career, you will need to ask a professor for a recommendation letter. Start early! Having your information together and planning in advance ensures a more organized application, a stronger letter, and a less stressful experience.*

## Preparing Your Request



**Review the requirements** for the recommendation letter(s) you need and think about the purpose of each letter you plan to submit. A recommendation letter from your professor will cover different topics when compared to a recommendation letter from your internship supervisor.



**Reflect** on your last year or two at Hunter, and consider which professors you got to know well AND in whose courses you excelled. *\*\*Remember that you should be asking professors, current/former supervisors, and current/former colleagues for recommendation letters. Academic and career advisors cannot speak to your academic and professional performance, so they cannot write you a recommendation letter.\*\**



**Narrow down your list** to professors whose fields are connected to yours. For example, when applying to a nursing program, a letter from a Biological Sciences professor will speak louder than a letter from a History professor.



**Find out when your recommendation letters are due.** From there, find a date that is about two weeks prior-- that will be the date you ask your recommenders to submit their letters by. Leaving room for any last-minute changes ensures that your application is finished on time and that your recommender can reach out to you with any questions or ask for an extension. *(\*You should be giving your recommender at least three weeks to work on this letter, meaning that you should begin this planning process well in advance of your application's due date!\*)*

## How Do I Ask a Professor to Write Me a Recommendation Letter?

### DON'T

- ❌ **DON'T** add the professor to your application WITHOUT asking first.
- ❌ **DON'T** ask someone who doesn't know you well.
- ❌ **DON'T** wait until the last minute.
- ❌ **DON'T** forget to give context. (An email that says "Can you write me a letter?" is not acceptable.)
- ❌ **DON'T** assume they'll say yes. Have backup plans!
- ❌ **DON'T** forget to say thank you, and **DON'T** forget to give your recommender updates on your applications as you hear back!

### DO

- ✅ **DO** speak with the professor after class or during office hours to discuss your plans.
- ✅ **DO** email the professor who you are asking to recommend you. Be sure to provide...
  - your name
  - course(s) you took with this professor
  - name of the program(s) or position(s) to which you are applying
  - why you are asking this professor
  - any information that you need included in your letter
  - the due date for their letter
  - how the letter needs to be submitted



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## SAMPLE EMAIL

Subject: Recommendation Letter Request

Message:

Hi Dr. [Professor's Last Name],

I hope this email finds you well! My name is [Your Name] and I'm currently a senior at Hunter majoring in Human Biology, working on planning my next steps after graduation. After taking ANTHP 302 with you during the Spring 2019 semester, I found myself interested in genetics and am now pursuing becoming a Genetic Counselor. In order to achieve this, I am planning on applying to Stanford's Human Genetics and Genetic Counseling MS Program. I'm writing to ask you if you would be willing to write a recommendation letter for me. If you are able to recommend me for this program, I would need the letter submitted through the Stanford application portal by March 16. According to Stanford's website, your letter would specifically address my academic work, as well as my ability to handle the position of being a Genetic Counselor. I have attached my unofficial transcript as well as my final paper in your class to refresh your memory. If you need any other information or have any questions, feel free to reach out to me! Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,  
[Your Name]

## Recommendation Letter Timeline

*Develop a relationship with your professors each semester by participating in class and attending office hours.*

**CONNECT**

*Figure out how many recommendation letters you need, and determine who you would like to ask.*

**PLAN**

*Send a professional email to your professor to ask if they can recommend you. Leave enough time to pivot to ask someone else if needed!*

**ASK**

*Continue working on your applications, checking to ensure your recommendation letters are submitted on time.*

**APPLY**

*Reach out to your recommender to give them updates as you hear the results of your applications.*

**FOLLOW  
UP**