

Obtaining Letters of Reference

- Choose your referees carefully. A person who knows you well can write a more substantial and helpful letter than someone who hardly knows you. In choosing between a person who taught you in a small class versus someone with a famous name or title but who cannot write a personal letter, choose the former. Letters from graduate student instructors are acceptable.
- When asking for the letter, make sure that you make an appointment to meet with the person whom you are asking. Don't ask for a reference over email. This is very impersonal and can be off-putting. Bring your resume, transcript, and tests/papers from classes taken with the faculty member and be prepared to talk about your future goals and past achievements. If an individual agrees to write on your behalf, present him/her with Waiver Reference Form from the Office of Pre-professional Advising or LSAC.
- Make sure that you allow the person the option of saying NO. You want to have strong letters and if a person is somewhat uncomfortable writing for you or doesn't have enough time, it is likely that the result will be short and weak. It is much better to have someone be honest with you at the start, so that you can find another referee who will be more enthusiastic.
- Give your referees plenty of advanced notice and time to write a good letter of recommendation (a month or even two), but also give negotiate a deadline. Make sure that they know your application timeline.
- Give your referees a stamped envelope addressed to either LSAC or the Office of Pre-professional Advising. **Do not rely on campus mail.**
- Write a thank you note following your initial request for the letter, thanking the individual for agreeing to write the letter.

Inform your writers when you have decided where you will be attending school and thank them again for their assistance and support.