

Letters of Recommendation Tip Sheet: Healthcare Professional (HCP) School

Letters of recommendation are a critical part of your application packet, so take care when planning how and when to ask for them.

The process starts long before you actually make your request. It is ideal to identify letter writers who are familiar with your career goals, past accomplishments, and work ethic. Your letters should be written by people with whom you've developed a good (and more than transient) relationship.

Read all application instructions before solidifying your plan for securing letters of recommendation.

- Choosing letter writers:

- It's typically helpful to have letters from different settings, e.g. an employer, a teacher, and someone with whom you've interacted in a professional/volunteer capacity (related to HCP).
- If you have done clinical work, consider having a least one of your letters written by a HCP who can vouch for your reliability, interactions with patients, trustworthiness, respect for cultural differences, etc.
- Consider including a letter from your most recent employer
- Don't assume you need a letter from a top ranked faculty member, especially if you don't have a strong relationship with such a person. A junior faculty member with whom you have a great relationship, who knows you well, is likely best positioned to write a strong letter (i.e. compared to a senior faculty member in the same group who does not know you well).



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- Asking for letters of recommendation:
 - Remember that you are hoping for a *great* letter of recommendation, not just a letter of recommendation. When requesting a letter, be blunt about asking for a *strong* letter. If the letter writer seems hesitant or pressed for time, it may be better to consider asking someone else.
 - It may be preferable to submit one fewer letter than to include a generic or unenthusiastic letter.
 - Ask for letters of recommendation in person if possible (or by phone or Skype if need be).
 - Give your letter writers plenty of advanced notice (3 months prior to your deadline is a good rule of thumb).
 - Include a copy of your personal statement, resume/CV, list of things you've accomplished on the job or in class, and a summary of programs/schools to which you're applying
 - Send this information by email even if you've also delivered it in person
 - Include a picture of yourself if it has been awhile since you've seen your letter writer
 - Be clear about letter due date(s) and include all instructions for how to submit the letter. Let your letter writers know what to look out for during the submission process (e.g. emails from centralized application websites)
 - Make sure your deadlines are clear—send follow up email reminders as appropriate
- Send a thank you letter/email to your letter writers and let them know where you eventually end up.

