Letters of Recommendation

CHEAT SHEET

Throughout your time at Vanderbilt, you should cultivate relationships with your professors, advisors, supervisors, and other mentors with whom you work. You will want a large team to draw from when it comes time to ask for letters of recommendation.

**DETERMINE** What kind of recommendation do you need? Match your recommender to each opportunity.

If the selection committee is looking for:

- ACADEMIC APTITUDE
- LEADERSHIP SKILLS
- FUTURE PLANS
- ADAPTABILITY

Ask someone who can speak to your:

- INTELLECTUAL SKILLS / PROWESS
- INITIATIVE & RESPONSIBILITIES
- CAREER TRAJECTORY / PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
- BEHAVIOR IN A CHALLENGING SITUATION

You want a tailored recommendation for each opportunity. Find the recommender who can cite specific examples of what you need to highlight for each selection committee.

#1 RULE

**WHO KNOWS YOU BEST?** Choose the recommenders who know you best. They’ll write the most substantive letter, which is more important than a fancy title.

**PLAN**

- Choose your recommenders carefully, especially if you’re applying to multiple opportunities.
- Ask well in advance; aim for 1 – 2 months before the deadline.

**PREP**

- Brief description of the fellowship.
- Updated resume.
- Deadline.
- Submission instructions.
- Brief outline of your long-term plans.
- Highlight one or two ideas they can write about that the selection committee is looking for.
- Draft version of your personal statement.

**POST**

What to do after your letters are submitted:

- Send each recommender a thank you note (handwritten or email). After all, you might want to ask them again in the future!
- Send a quick note as you move through the process. Your recommenders will appreciate knowing their letters have helped you become a finalist and / or fellow!

PRO TIP:

Send a new email with this draft a few weeks later. It will remind your recommender of the upcoming deadline!