

## **How to Request a Recommendation from an Instructor**

Please follow these common-sense guidelines when requesting a recommendation for a scholarship, an internship, or acceptance into a graduate school or any professional or scholastic program.

### **1. Greet your professor politely.**

Even email messages should begin with a proper greeting and close with a thank you and a respectful farewell. Make sure to address your instructor appropriately, as well. If he has his doctorate, for example, address him as “Dr.” followed by his last name. You can find instructors’ titles, names, email addresses, office numbers, and other pertinent information by searching for them on UTA’s faculty profile system, here: <https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/>

### **2. Identify yourself clearly.**

Even though your instructor may know you by sight and even by name, do not assume that he remembers exactly what section of what class you were in during which semester(s). To write a proper recommendation, he/she will need to check your grade record, so be sure to remind him which classes you had him for in which semesters. Also, make sure to include your first name and last name in addition to the name you went by in class. Including your student ID# is also recommended.

### **3. Give the instructor at least two weeks’ notice.**

In addition to teaching classes, your instructor has a wide range of responsibilities that includes grading, posting and averaging grades, developing curriculum, writing exams, conducting research, submitting papers, attending conferences, participating in board and departmental meetings, writing grants, developing course proposals, evaluating textbooks, writing syllabi, and various administrative duties, not to mention writing recommendations for other students. If you expect a carefully written, thoughtful recommendation letter, you need to give him enough time to work it in to what is most likely a very busy schedule. This is especially true if you are expecting it to be printed on letterhead or have multiple or lengthy forms for him to complete.

### **4. Do not ask for a recommendation from an instructor whose class you did not do your best work in.**

No matter how talented or dedicated you are, a professor can only judge your abilities based on the work you performed in his or her class. Emailing an instructor whose class you received a C in a request to write a letter of recommendation for you is likely to receive no response. Even if the instructor agrees to write a recommendation, he may find it difficult to write as glowing a description of your abilities as you might think you deserve. If you received anything lower than an A- (or a very hard-earned B++) in the instructor’s class, or if your attendance record, participation, or study habits were poor, you should consider asking another instructor instead.

**5. Email the instructor all applicable information.**

Be sure to include information pertaining to what program or scholarship you are applying for, the due date/postmark date of the recommendation, whether the recommendation should be completed online or in writing, whether a form must be completed or the letter must be on letterhead, whether the envelope should be sealed or not, to whom the recommendation should be addressed, whether you will pick up the envelope personally or whether it should be mailed or uploaded, the address it should be mailed to, and what aspects of your performance (e.g. coursework, leadership skills, extracurricular involvement) should be mentioned. I also recommend that you include a résumé or brief summary of academic and professional experience and awards along with information about the application.

**6. Make sure you have done your part first.**

If there is a form that must be completed, whether it is a hard copy or online, make sure you have filled out the parts that apply to you before you ask your professor to complete the rest. Also, if a form must be downloaded and printed or copied, print it out yourself and provide them to your instructor. All too often, instructors click on the link provided to an online letter of recommendation form only to find that the first section of the form must be completed by the applicant. Don't expect your professor to figure this out for you.

**7. Provide postage for documents that must be mailed.**

If the instructor needs to mail the recommendation, provide an addressed, stamped envelope for him/her to send in it. Make sure the envelope is large enough to fit all necessary documents and that the postage is sufficient to cover mailing costs.

**8. It is acceptable to follow-up with the professor via email a couple of days before the due date of the letter,** but don't pester him with repeated emails, phone calls, or visits.

**9. Don't forget to thank the professor in writing after the recommendation has been completed.** Gifts are not necessary, but a simple hand-written message on a notecard is much appreciated.

**10. Above all, remember that the best way to earn a good recommendation is to perform well.** Most people are more than happy to write an excellent letter of recommendation for a student who consistently exceeds expectations, whether in the classroom, on the job, or as part of your work with an extracurricular club or group. A glowing recommendation is one of the perks of an excellent performance. So if you're planning on applying for a program or scholarship in the future, start doing your best work now!