

REQUESTING REFERENCES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Office for Career Success

Strong references and recommendation letters can make or break an application. Building these relationships takes time, so start early—ideally by your sophomore or junior year. Faculty, supervisors, and mentors are often happy to write on your behalf, but they need the right information from you to craft a compelling letter.

WHO TO ASK

- Faculty members with whom you have had significant academic interaction (not just attendance)
- Supervisors from internships, jobs, or volunteer positions who can speak to your work ethic and skills
- Mentors or advisors who know you well and can provide specific examples of your strengths
- Academic or community leaders who have worked closely with you on projects or initiatives

AVOID:

Family members, friends, clergy (unless directly relevant), peers/classmates, therapists or counselors, or anyone who cannot speak to your professional or academic abilities.

HOW TO ASK

- Ask in person when possible—email, phone call is acceptable if distance is an issue
- Give at least 3-6 weeks notice before the deadline
- If someone seems hesitant, thank them and ask someone else; you want enthusiastic endorsements
- Clearly explain what the letter is for (job, grad school, fellowship, etc.) and any specific points you hope they will address
- Ask how they prefer to submit the letter (email, online portal, etc.)

WHAT TO PROVIDE YOUR REFERENCE

- A current copy of your resume or CV
- A brief summary of your career goals or why you are applying
- Details about the position or program (job description, program info, etc.)
- Any forms or instructions from the organization
- A list of specific experiences, projects, or skills you hope they will highlight
- Deadlines clearly stated in your request
- Your preferred contact information format (phone, email, title)

STAYING ORGANIZED & FOLLOWING UP

- Send a thank you email within a week of them agreeing to write for you
- Ask if they would like a reminder email or call one week before the deadline
- If applying to multiple positions, let them know—some may prefer to write one strong letter you can reuse
- Keep your references updated on your progress (when you get interviews, offers, etc.)
- Send a final thank you once the process is complete, especially if you get the position

PRO TIPS:

- Build relationships early so you are not scrambling at the last minute
- Ask for 3-5 references so you have options depending on the opportunity
- Keep your references informed—they appreciate knowing how their letter helped
- Update your reference list regularly as you gain new experiences and supervisors

Questions about references? Contact careers@spalding.edu or book directly through mySpalding Student Success scheduling portal