

# Letters of Recommendation

!!! info “Credit” Specific language on this page comes from the [Peelle Lab](#) at Washington University in Saint Louis.

Letters of Recommendation (LORs) are an important currency in our field, especially around hiring (everything from applying to grad school to academic and industry jobs). Writing LORs is largely a PI responsibility. However, if you would like a LOR there are things you can do to make the process smooth and ensure that you get a good letter.

## Should I Ask?

I (James) will write a letter for any student or lab member who has spent at least three months working in the lab. Letters will be provided for shorter-term lab members in exceptional circumstances (e.g., new graduate students or postdocs applying for fellowships). I maintain this policy because I do not think that I can adequately evaluate someone who has been around for less than a year.

## Students

If you have taken a class with me but not worked in my lab, I may not be a strong letter writer for you. However, if you need a LOR and don't have better letter writers, you're welcome to ask. Understand that I can only write about your

## How To

1. I request **at least three weeks of notice for letters of recommendation** and request more. If you have asked me for a similar letter in the past, then less time is probably OK. If something comes up and you have to ask me for a letter with less advance notice I will do my best to accommodate but might have to say no.
2. Provide key information in a single email to me (this is one of a few things that shouldn't go on Slack)
  1. Deadline of the letter
  2. Main things to focus on:
    1. What do you hope that I will say about you?
    2. How will your application be evaluated?
    3. Why am I particularly well suited to write you a letter of application?
  3. Any materials you have submitted as part of your application (it's OK if these are draft materials)
  4. Clear instructions on how to submit the letter.

5. Provide a critical self-assessment. What are your strong points? What are points for growth? This is part of the letter, so if you can provide suggestions
3. Provide updates as the deadline approaches

## Pro Tips

You are encouraged to read advice like

- [How to get a great letter of recommendation](#) by Matt Might.
- this Twitter thread:

It's application season. In just a couple years I went from a near total rejection rate to a 100% success rate for everything I've applied for. In addition to luck + timing, one of the biggest changes I made came from letters of recommendation. Let me show you how.

— Dr. Arianna Long (([astroarianna?](#))) October 17, 2022