A **recommendation letter** (letter of reference) is a written assessment of your qualities, capabilities and characteristics. This letter is meant to endorse you for a particular graduate program, internship, fellowship, volunteer opportunity or job.

Most letters of recommendation for an academic program are written by faculty members, supervisor, or academic advisors who have had direct contact with you and know you well.

**When to Ask**

Know that you may not be the only one asking for a reference from the same individual. Therefore, give your reference at least three to four weeks to write the recommendation.

**How to Ask**

Asking for a recommendation in person is more meaningful than through any other method, but email is fine if done correctly. Just make sure it has correct punctuation, is free of grammatical or spelling errors and that you use his/her correct title (i.e. Dr. Smith, Professor Lopez, etc.).

**What to Provide When Asking For a Reference**

Provide the individual with your contact information and most recent résumé or curriculum vitae (CV). Be sure to include a brief overview of the program for which you are applying and the reasons for your interest. A good letter discusses your qualities and characteristics using examples from your history to support its claims in relation to the field of interest in question.

Explain the application process by which they will be completing and submitting their recommendation of you (i.e. online link, email sent to them, mailing address, etc.). Be clear to mention any guidelines and deadlines that must be followed or met.

**Other Things to Consider**

A **confidential** letter means you, the applicant, cannot see the letter before it is sent to the review committee. This is typically indicated by the program which will send a direct email to the person providing the recommendation.

Follow up a week or two before the deadline to confirm that he/she has submitted his/her recommendation.

Whether selected for a program or not, be sure to send a thank you note to your references and provide them with a status of your application.