

Helpful Tips for Letters of Recommendation

Office of Nationally Competitive Awards

Who to Ask

- Professors in your field of study and/or if you're teaching overseas, who can speak to your language ability
 - There is a separate language evaluator form, but these professors may be able to do more to speak about your ability to teach, lead, your personal and academic growth as well
 - PhDs preferred (definitely no TAs)
- People who have seen you as a worker [MUST BE RELATED TO PROGRAM]
 - This does not mean include your boss that hired you to bus tables. If you want to have a boss write one, they should see you in a leadership role of some sort or be related to your field of study/research
- People who have seen you study/live abroad
 - These people are great recommenders because they can speak to your ability to represent the US abroad and personal qualifications such as resilience, adaptability, and flexibility.
 - They also usually see you study or work abroad also
- Mentors, Coaches, Supervisors
 - One of these is **REQUIRED** for ETA
 - Again, can speak to your ability to interact with children, teach people, lead programs, mentor, create places for community to interact, or many other volunteer, leadership, community roles
- **No** character references- they have to have seen you in something academic or professional

How to Ask

- Preferably in person. Visit them in their office hours or email them to set up another time. If you must do it over email, use our [template](#)
- Tell them about the program, why you think they would do a good job
 - "You can speak to my academic performance" or "I am asking you because you have seen me as a teacher/mentor/leader..."
- Offer to give them your grant statement of purpose and your personal statement
 - They may want a resume as well, so have a copy of that ready just in case

When to Ask

- At least 2 months before the due date
- If you ask them earlier, say in the spring semester over the summer, then send them a reminder once the fall semester starts

Following Up

- Check up with them if you haven't heard from them about 3-4 weeks before the deadline

- “Dear Professor, I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to write me a letter of recommendation for my Fulbright program. The deadline is _____. I wanted to see if you had any questions for me regarding the process. Thanks again for your time and consideration. Sincerely, ...”
- We at the NCA Office will also be checking in with them to make sure they know how much to write and what is required of them BUT it is also your responsibility as the applicant to communicate with your recommenders

Common FAQs

- Am I allowed to view the document and give suggestions?
 - No you are not. These letters are confidential. However, when asking, you are allowed to say things like “I am asking because you have seen me perform academically in # of courses”, “I am asking you because you saw me study in (this country)”, and/or “I am asking because you have seen me work as a teacher/researcher/etc”
- Can their letter be in another language? Can I translate it?
 - No, it must be in English. If it is written in another language, then someone else needs to officially translate it. You cannot because these need to be confidential. The original and the translation both need to be uploaded to the Fulbright application.
- Can they mail letters in?
 - No, these letters are all submitted electronically. They will receive instructions and the link when you input their email addresses into the application.