

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

College of Arts & Sciences

Advising & Career Services

Letters of Recommendation

Each law school is given the choice of how many letters of recommendation they require. Check with the schools in which you are applying and at lsac.org to gather information on what each school prefers. Letters of recommendation should be personalized, allowing recommenders to express growth and emphasize the applicant's unique strengths. The letter of recommendation will be more beneficial if a reference has known the applicant for a long time and can speak in detail about their qualifications.

Cultivate Recommender Relationships Early

Start to think about letters of recommendation at the beginning of your college career. Cultivating relationships throughout your undergraduate career will help your recommenders become well acquainted with you and your work so that they can write with meaningful insight. If you plan to ask professors, try to take multiple classes from the same professor and visit regularly during office hours to discuss course material and to share your career plans. Find opportunities to stand out academically. This could include applying for research or teaching assistant positions. Ideally, strong letters are those that commend your academic performance in depth.

Choosing Recommenders and Number of Letters

Law schools seek students who are articulate and think critically. As a result, most schools prefer recommendations from professors, as they can assess your academic training. You are encouraged to ask at least two professors for recommendations. If you are applying to a law school that requires more than two recommendations, or if you feel you would get a stronger reference from an employment or internship supervisor, you may want to ask these sources as well. Ultimately, seek recommenders who can best speak to your academic ability, character, work ethic, and commitment to becoming an attorney. Avoid requesting recommendations from family friends, religious leaders, or "names in high places." While there is no universal number of letters of recommendation required, most law schools require at least two recommendations, and will accept as many as three or four. You need to carefully check the requirements of all of the law schools to which you are applying to be sure you are following specific instructions. Admission committees appreciate having multiple perspectives as long as the letters of recommendation are not overly repetitious.

Information to Provide Recommenders

Although recommenders may have the chance to see your work through classes, internships, or employment, do not presume they remember everything about you. It is a good idea to meet in person to share your reasons for pursuing law and your career goals. You will also want to provide them with your resume, personal statement, a list of schools you are applying to with deadlines, and transcripts.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation through Law School Admission Council

When you register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) you will provide the names and contact information of your recommenders. That information, along with your Law School Admission Council (LSAC) account number and a barcode, will appear on a letter of recommendation form which you will print out to give to your recommenders. Inclusion of the account number and barcode will ensure that the letter will be matched with the correct account when received and scanned at LSAC, thus reducing the number of returned letters and possible data entry errors. Most applicants now waive the right to see the contents of their letters of recommendation. Recommenders who provide email addresses will be notified by email of the receipt of a letter by LSAC for verification purposes. Postcards will be used only if an email address fails or if no email address has been indicated.

Note - Applicants are able to choose how recommenders are contacted and whether the recommendation is sent electronically via email or by hard copy via regular mail. When requesting an electronic letter of recommendation, applicants are prompted to indicate whether they do or do not waive their right to access the letter. Once the email is sent to the recommender, applicants cannot change their choice to waive. Deleting a recommender and adding them back is also not allowed. Please make sure you have carefully indicated your choice to waive or not waive before submitting the electronic letter of recommendation.

Additional Resources

Pre-Law Advising (<http://casadvising.syr.edu/>)

LSAC (<https://www.lsac.org/>)

American Bar Association (<https://www.americanbar.org/aba.html>)