ASKING FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

A well-written letter of recommendation provides admissions committees with information that isn’t found elsewhere in your application. It provides a detailed discussion of personal qualities, accomplishments, and experiences what make you unique.

Plan it out.
Choose your letter of recommendation writers carefully. What’s your relationship with the writer, what interactions have you had? Can they describe your work positively and discuss your skills and evaluate your level of professionalism?

Pick the most strategic recommendations (academic vs professional reference)

Plan out your timing and approach; ask early (ideally, 6-8 weeks before you need them). Avoid putting pressure on your letter writer with approaching deadlines. Give him or her plenty of time to review and consider your performance.

How many letters?
Typically health professional schools will ask for 2 letters from science faculty you have taken a course with, in addition some schools like request a letter from a health professional you have shadowed (DO schools prefer a letter from a DO you have shadowed). Look at the recommendations required by the various health professional schools you are applying too. Typically, schools want 3-5 letters of recommendation.

Ask personally.
Ask your recommender face-to-face to convey how important this letter is to you. Do not make the request via email. Ask if they can write a strong letter of recommendation

Provide necessary materials.
You may want to include a resume, relevant writing sample, or PowerPoint presentation that highlights your accomplishments. Give them your information in case they need to reach you, tell them what you would like emphasized in each letter and information about yourself if the writer doesn’t know you well.

Waive your right to read the letter.
It is highly recommended that you waive your rights to read the letter. This not only helps the writer feel more comfortable but assures the reader that he can write a candid letter about the student. Research has shown that confidential letters carry more impact.

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