

LAW SCHOOL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION (LORs): A STUDENT GUIDE

Q1: What purpose do LORs serve?

- provide interpersonal and relational information about you
- assess your fitness for a program or enterprise
- allow reviewers to get to know you beyond your resume

- give insight into who you are rather than what you are
- confirm strengths and balance out weaknesses evident in your application



Q2: What type of person should write a LOR?

- someone whom the readers will find credible and that meets the reference writer criteria
- professors and/or supervisors with whom you have worked in a professional setting
- someone who matches the goals and mission of the opportunity you seek
- someone who will speak to your strengths
- the best writer for you, which is limited to professors in whose course you got an A

Q3: Who should not write a LOR for me?

- friends, parents, relatives, peers or TAs unless specifically required
- anyone from high school unless specifically required
- anyone with a high rank or title that does not actually know you and your work

Q4: Can a weak LOR damage my application?

- Weak or damaging LORs reflect on you, not the writer, and lessen chances of selection.

Q5: When do I ask professors and others to write a LOR for me?

- Your request for a LOR begins **before you need one**. Cultivating relationships with professors during and after a course is key because every professor you have is a potential recommendation writer.
- with enough lead time for the writer (weeks ahead, not days)

Q6: How do I ask for a LOR?

- “Would you feel comfortable writing me a strong, positive letter of recommendation?”
 - in person (by phone if not possible; avoid email)
 - with attention given to the response, e.g. hesitation when asked
 - with the understanding that nobody is required to write a LOR for you
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Q7: What do I give the letter writers after they to write a LOR?

- a reminder of how long you have known each other and in what capacity
- information about the opportunity and specific application criteria for the LOR
- a request to use official letterhead, sign the letter, and provide contact information
- a copy of your application materials (essays, resume, etc.)
- work samples from the writer’s class (projects, etc.)
- a short summary of what you learned as a person and as a student in his/her class
- your name as it appears on your transcripts
- a reminder of your preferred name or chosen name if not the same as what is on your transcript and if you are comfortable providing this information to the letter writer
- a reminder of your chosen name and the pronouns you use
- an unofficial transcript when appropriate/possible
- permission or a request not to mention circumstances that affected your performance
- deadlines (provide a false deadline if necessary)



Q8: What should I do after someone agrees to writer a LOR for me?

- Follow up and check in as the deadline approaches.
- Have back-up writers in place in case the writers do not follow through for you.
- Provide updates about the status of your completed application.
- Let the writer know the results of your application.
- Send a handwritten thank you note.
- Maintain the relationship.

Law School Admission Council Rules Governing Misconduct and Irregularities in the Admission Process

Applicants are not allowed to write any portion of their own letters of recommendation. LSAC includes the “submission of an altered, unauthentic, or unauthorized letter of recommendation” among its examples of misconduct and irregularities.

<https://www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/jd-docs/rules-misconduct-irregularities.pdf>

Applicants also may waive their rights to see their letters of recommendation as part of the application process. Letter writers are not expected to provide copies of their letters to applicants if a waiver is in place or if not comfortable doing so.

