

To: Senior Psychology Majors
Fr: Ruth Rorem
Re: Letters of Recommendation

Many graduate schools weigh recommendation letters very highly. Your letters of recommendation could become one of your greatest assets! You should attain letters from faculty who know you best, with whom you have interacted with both in and outside of class. A bland or neutral letter from somebody who knows you only by name can hurt more than it helps. At Biola, especially in our Psychology Department, you have the unique opportunity to get to know the faculty. Get involved in Psi Chi and other activities in the department. Talk to faculty. The better they know you, the more likely they can write a convincing letter.

When you ask a professor to write a letter of recommendation, you will need to provide some written information about yourself: overall GPA, list of psychology courses taken, your minor if you have one, titles and abstracts of any research papers written, honor societies to which you belong, awards that you have won, activities in which you have participated (and any offices held), work experience, internship experience, service activities, a description of your professional goals, etc. The Psyc Department provides you with a “Recommendation Form” template for this purpose. You should fill out the form *before* you leave the university. We keep it in your student file, you’ll have most of required information when you need it and you can update the form easily.

Here is a checklist (please read CAREFULLY and complete ALL NECESSARY steps):

- Ask the referee cordially and formally in person or, if that is not possible, through email.
- Ask for a letter *at least three weeks before the date it is due*. Each faculty member is asked to write letters for many students, so giving them enough lead time is important. If you are not applying to grad schools immediately, you can keep the form in your student file. Then, when you need a recommendation letter, you can ask the front desk for the form and update it easily.
- Be sure to supply OUR “Recommendation Form” for EACH professor.
- If a recommendation form is requested from a particular school you are applying for, make sure you supply this to your professor(s) as well.
- Highly recommended: Provide a copy of your unofficial degree audit available through your BSI account, NOT an unofficial transcript. (Only the Degree Audit will have both your CUM GPA and PSYC GPA). It is a valuable tool and helps expedite the letter writing process.
- Some professors may request a copy of a paper you had written for their class, with original markings. (Therefore it would be wise to keep your **original** papers for at least a year). Electronic copies would not be appropriate.
- Provide the full name, title and complete mailing address of the person to whom a letter should be written, along with due dates and any special instructions. We also provide a template for this, see our “Recommendation Timeline Form.”
- Provide the proper stamps and typed address labels. Envelopes are not necessary because most of the time, the professor will be sending the letter in an official, university envelope.
- Be sure to indicate for what purpose the letter is being written (e.g., specific Masters, Psy.D. or Ph.D. program, etc.). The more specific the purpose, the more specific (and pertinent) the letter.
- Waive your rights to read the letter or form. Recipients place more credence to letters that are not read by students. If you are in doubt about the kind of recommendation the referee will write, ask.

The Recommendation and Recommendation Timeline forms are available at the front desk or on our Psychology Department website: <http://biola.edu/academics/undergrad/psyc/forms/>. Feel free to contact the office with any questions.