Preparing for the Match
Letters of Recommendation

Faculty Letters of Recommendation

Programs will generally request that three or four letters of recommendation from faculty members be submitted as part of your application package. You should select three or four faculty members who know you and ask each one to write a letter of recommendation for you. The ideal letter is written by a senior faculty member who knows you well, whose field is in the specialty to which you are applying, who is known at the program to which you are applying. The ideal may not be attainable, but try. You can obtain advice about these choices from your advisor and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. A copy of your biographic sketch, a written statement of your career goals and a brief reminder of your contact with them will help the faculty write better letters on your behalf. These letters should be sent by the faculty member directly to the residency program for NON-ERAS Programs. For ERAS Programs, they should be uploaded by the faculty member directly into the ERAS system. For NON-ERAS Programs, be sure to provide the faculty member with a list of persons and addresses to whom they should send the letter of recommendation.

These letters can be very valuable to program directors looking for some distinguishing characteristics among the many applications they receive. After reading through this manual, everyone will know how to write a good CV and personal statement, the quality of letters of recommendation may be the strength of your application.

Your letters of recommendation often become an important reflection of your academic performance and serve as an important source of information about your non-cognitive qualities.

Number of Letters
Most residency programs request three or four letters of recommendation. Sometimes they specify certain departments or rotations from which the letters should originate; be sure to follow directions from the program brochure. One letter should come from the Chair of the Department into which your residency of choice falls. Occasionally, a letter from a person not involved in the profession of medicine will be requested. Do not send more letters than are requested unless you have one that is especially dazzling. Some programs review only the first letters to arrive up to the number they request and subsequent letters are ignored. Therefore, it is in your best interest to follow the "N + 1 Rule," i.e., if "N" is the number of letters requested, send no less than "N," but send no more than "N + 1."

Timeline
Letters should be uploaded/mailed to programs in August and September. So, start soon and avoid procrastination. Common reasons to procrastinate include:

- "I don't know anyone well enough to ask for a letter."
- "I hate asking for letters...I'll wait until August."
- "I did well on surgery but that was six months ago...they won't remember me..."
- "Dr. Scholarmann is on sabbatical and I'll just wait until she gets back."
- "I'm an average student so I'll just get a two liner from one of my attendings later on...a quick phone call will solve that problem when the time comes."
- "I'll dazzle them on my next rotation and get the best letter yet."
It is common courtesy to make arrangements for obtaining letters as soon as possible. You may begin now by requesting letters from previous rotations. Postponing a letter request until you have completed a specific rotation of particular interest may be indicated. Try to allow at least 1 month from the time you request a letter until it must arrive at its destination. Bear in mind that faculty is often out of town or may have multiple letters to write.

**Requesting a Letter**

In most instances, you will request a letter from a rotation in which you did well, that relates to your chosen field, or was specifically requested by the program brochure. When possible, choose someone who knows you well over someone who does not. Choose someone who can judge your clinical skills and intentions as well as your personal qualities. Choosing at least one person who is likely to be recognized by the program is also a good idea. Also, make it easy for the person preparing your letter by providing a CV and a copy of your personal statement. Make a brief appointment with the letter writer to review your resume personally and to provide additional personal information, particularly if you can remind him or her of some specific event or situation in which you performed well on his or her rotation.

Each letter writer must receive the following from you: a LoR request form printed from the ERAS website showing your letter ID number. Authors must upload letters into the ERAS system (Letter of Recommendation Portal, LoRP) themselves or by their department administrative personnel.

**FERPA Release Form**

Complete the FERPA Form to authorize faculty and staff access to your educational record. Agree to waive the right to review the letter.

**Chair’s Letter**

Many hospitals request letters of recommendation from the chairperson of the department (chief of service) of the specialty in which you are applying. These letters usually reflect the department’s composite assessment of its experience with you. Most department chairpersons will ask that you schedule an interview with them and provide them with a copy of your personal statement and/or CV before they will write a letter for you. Once you know where you want the chairperson's letter sent, submit the list to the chairperson's office.

**Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)**

MSPE, formerly known as the Dean's Letter. Is NOT one of your LoRs.