

Recommendation Letters

I am happy to write letters of recommendation for students, whether for graduate school, a campus leadership position, or a summer program. Choosing the right reference writer, however, is just as important as the quality of the letter, and before you ask me to write you a letter, I ask that you take a few minutes to consider the items below. If after your consideration, you think I am the appropriate person to write a letter, then see the following pages for my requirements. The purpose of this is not to deter you from asking me for a letter, but rather to insure you get the best possible letter from the best possible writer.

Question 1: What do you want the letter to say about you, and can I attest to these things?

For example, if you were a student in one of my courses and aced every exam without ever coming to office hours, then I could write a great letter about your content knowledge but perhaps not about your work ethic or perseverance. Similarly, if you earned a C in my course, but overcame early difficulties in the course and greatly improved throughout the semester, then I can certainly attest to your work ethic and perseverance. Think about the characteristics you would like me to highlight in a letter and whether you think I am the best person to attest to the characteristics.

Question 2: How highly will this program/position view a letter from your math professor?

If you're applying for graduate school in mathematics, you will certainly want letters from math professors you've had. On the other hand, if you're applying for a corporate position, perhaps a letter from a previous internship director would be more highly regarded. No matter how excellent a letter I write you, it will not be beneficial if the reader does not view me as particularly qualified to judge the characteristics for which they are looking.

Question 3: What will my letter add that others will not?

This is particularly important to consider for positions that ask for multiple letters for recommendation. For example, if you're applying for graduate school, it would be good to have people that can speak to you as a student in the classroom (e.g., a professor you had for several classes) and also as a researcher (e.g., a research project supervisor). I may be able to write a great letter, but it might not be as impactful if someone else is saying exactly the same thing.

If you still aren't sure if I'm the right person to write a letter for you, come talk to me! We can work through all these questions together, and either decide that I am the right person to write you a letter, or brainstorm other people who might be better.

If you think I am the right person to write a letter for you, see the next page.

**The material found here was inspired by material from several other mathematicians, but primarily Jeremy Rouse of Wake Forest University.*

Requirements for Recommendation Letter

1. Talk to me as soon as possible, but no later than three weeks before the letter is due. Please do not submit my name as a reference writer until we have spoken. This insures I don't receive a request for a recommendation by surprise and inadvertently delete it.
2. Find out the preferred method of submission, either by mail (e-mail or snail mail), fax, or online submission. If applicable, you must waive your right to view the letter. Only in usual circumstances will I provide a copy of the letter directly to the student in a signed, sealed envelope.
3. Complete the form on the next page and submit no later than two weeks before the letter is due. Along with this, please submit copies of everything else submitted with your application (e.g., resume, answers to essay questions, personal statements). A good draft will suffice if final versions are not available.
4. You should receive email confirmation from me once I complete your letter. If you have not heard from me and there is less than a week until your letter is due, please send me a polite reminder.
5. Let me know the outcome!

Quinn Morris Recommendation Request Form

Name: _____ Year: Fr. So. Jr. Sr. Other

Major: _____ Due Date of First Letter: ___/___/___

Program Type (please check one):

- Graduate School *(if so, please list all schools for which you want me to submit a letter on the back)*
- Summer Research Program *(if so, please list all programs for which you want me to submit a letter on the back)*
- Other: _____

Submission Type:

- Email
- Snail Mail
- Online Submission

Address *(if email or snail mail)*

Classes taken with me and grades earned in those classes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In what way will this position/honor/award help you achieve your long term goals?

Names of Schools/Programs

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____