



## TO SOLICIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDY

If you are a senior and you're thinking about a graduate program—even in the distant future—the time for getting a Professor's recommendation on file is NOW—before you leave. The best recommendation letters are the most specific, so ask those profs to write them while the details of your amazing performance are still clear in their minds. I can assure you that three years from now, they won't remember even the best students with the kind of freshness it takes to write a credible letter. You don't have to be "very close" to a prof to request a letter, but you should have done very good work in his or her class. Ideally, the class should have been at an advanced level, and the work individualized—not merely a midterm and a final. Bring the professor a copy of that excellent project to refresh his or her memory. If a prof can't write a good recommendation for you, he or she will probably decline. This is fine; you do not want a prof to write a "lukewarm" recommendation. Letters from employers of non-academic jobs do not carry the same weight as letters from your professors. Graduate programs are looking for predictors of ACADEMIC success, not character references. The exception to this might be professional Master's programs which usually take into account their applicants' service and volunteer experiences.

Hint: Try not to make this request by e-mail or telephone; talk to your professor in person