



Tips on Asking for Letters of Reference

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Must....

- have taken a course with your referee
- fill in the application forms correctly (name, address, ID number)
- know what you are being evaluated on
- provide deadline dates for the referee

Should...

- have a B+ in the course or your best grade
- give the referee sufficient time
- provide the referee with your transcript or work you have done with him/her
- ask the referee in person (put faces to names)
- provide a package with all the material

Nice to ...

have had the prof for more than one course

have the referee be a full time prof (vs. adjuncts or teaching fellows)

note that the most important variable is familiarity

provide a resume with extra-curricular activities or work experience

provide address labels

acknowledge the letter (email, phone call)

What makes a good reference?

Faculty member who can comment on your verbal and written abilities

--*Ideally*, a faculty member who has taught you over several years/classes

--*Ideally*, a permanent faculty member whose work is known by the department you are applying to but this is balanced by how familiar the referee is to you

What makes a good application?

- a clear plan of research
 - is it doable?
 - are there good data sources?
 - is it original?
- a good fit with your research and faculty members' interests
- evidence of knowledge in the field
 - i.e., application is usually based on a course essay

Some parting thoughts....

1. You do not need to be a political studies major to go to law school.
2. You do not need to go to law school if you're a political studies major.
3. You do not need to go to law school.

courtesy of Seth Masket
