Requests for Letters of Recommendation

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I am willing to write letters of recommendation for students and others that I have known in a professional context. It is best to solicit letters from someone who knows your work well. In the case of a student, it is best if I have had you in at least one class (preferably more); if you have done some research or major writing assignments in said class(es); and if I know you personally. If you do not meet any of these conditions, I strongly urge you to seek a letter from someone who knows you and your performance better. These guidelines will help me write the best letter I can for you in a prompt manner.

Typically such letters are requested for graduate study, internships, study abroad, or jobs. Because letters are typically requested in confidence, I like to send them directly to the institution/group/job, and thus only rarely release them to you directly. I promise to be honest with you if I am uncomfortable writing a strong letter on your behalf.

Please adhere to the following guidelines/best practices:

* Letters should typically be requested AT LEAST 2 WEEKS in advance. While I recognize that some deadlines need to be sooner, please recognize that it may not be possible to meet quick turnarounds (usually in such cases places will accept letters late)
* For each letter, I need the following: address (to whom it’s directed), due date, and description of the position/program/internship
* I need information from you as well for each letter. The more you give me, the better the letter will be. Ideally, I need an application letter (draft is fine), CV or resume, and a writing sample.
* When there is a question of online or paper submittal, I greatly prefer online – either email, through the institution’s website, or interfolio. If a hardcopy is required, there is no need for you to give me stamps; I have letterhead and postage covered.
* If you use a service (such as interfolio), it is really best to have me send SPECIFIC letters for each institution or position rather than one generic letter. Once I have a basic letter, it is easy for me to tailor it to the job/school/internship/program in question.
* If there are multiple letters, I prefer it if you can provide the information all at once in the form of a MS Word document or spreadsheet, listing address, due date, description of position, etc.
* It is fine to send reminders, but please do so respecting that I have other demands on my time. Good rule of thumb is a week in advance and a day in advance.
* Please recognize letters will be sent but often not until close to the due date. Also recognize there is usually flexibility for deadlines of letter receipt, so if I miss a deadline by a day, there is usually no problem with submitting it.
* If you are requesting a letter as a student in a large 200 level survey class, it is best to solicit the letter from your T.A. (which I can then sign), since they know your work best (and the letter will be more specific).

Thank you for adhering to these guidelines, and let me know if you have questions or concerns.