

# LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION





## WHAT IS AN LOR? WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

LOR is the abbreviation for a Letter of Recommendation. It is a document that gives the college or university admission officers sufficient insight into your candidature. Most universities require three LORs, and you can choose the people you want the recommendation from.

A letter of recommendation is important and mandatory if you want to study abroad. A good one improves your chances of admission. You can request your schoolteacher or professor to write one for you. Or, if you have had any work experience, you can ask your employer or boss to do it. So, what does this document contain?

An LOR is an impartial (and honest) representation of you. It must support your candidacy by making claims about you that are genuine. The letter must endorse your ability to excel at the academic program you are targeting. This letter has to come from a source whose credibility is beyond question. If you are moving abroad for a graduate degree, your school will guide you on procuring one. For a PhD candidate, Letters of Recommendation can be significant because they endorse the candidate's research ability.

## TYPES OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

You have the privilege to choose who will write your recommendation. Ideally, you would want a person who is trustworthy and agrees to endorse your candidature. There are two types of Letters of Recommendation:

### Academic Letters of Recommendation

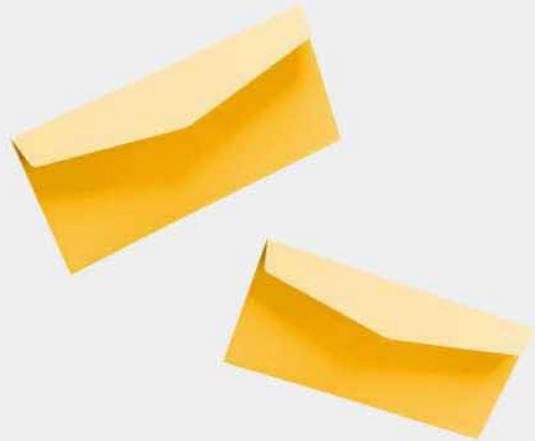
A good tip is to request your Head of Department or a senior professor with whom you have had the privilege of studying under. Choose people who hold you in high regard and those who hold a good position in academia. Their views will carry more weight.

While a senior faculty member or department head is ideal, avoid requesting someone with whom you have never studied under, even if they hold a high position. Because they do not know you personally, their recommendation may not sound genuine.

### Professional Letters of Recommendation

In case you are employed (part-time, full-time or internship), you can get a letter of recommendation from your project manager or team lead. The longer you have worked, the better it is to get a LOR from the manager. This is because they are expected to know your skills and achievements in detail.

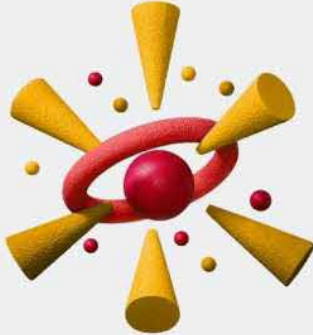
For those applying for a PhD, getting a LOR from somebody in your desired research area helps a lot. Get at least one LOR that establishes your reputation as somebody with an ability to research.





## IMPORTANCE OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

A letter of recommendation mostly discusses your personality and other skills that are important for students. An academic LOR is considered a testimony of your abilities while providing information on your qualities such as discipline, dedication, motivation towards studies, the way you respond in class etc. A letter of recommendation is an opinion about you that could increase your chances of getting admitted to an educational institution overseas.



You must submit the LOR on the official letterhead of your school, college or organisation. If you have worked on any project and received good grades or awards or commendations and you have spoken about it in your resume and statement of purpose, you can request your professor to mention it in the recommendation letter.

A letter of recommendation should also endorse your leadership skills. Foreign university give a lot of importance to leadership, and if your professor endorses your skills in this area, you will start off at an advantage.

## WHAT TO WRITE IN A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?

You can discuss with your teacher or professor about what to include in your letter of recommendation. For instance, you may talk to them about what you have been working on, what you plan to pursue further so that they can address it through their LOR.

On occasion, your professor might ask you to draft a letter which they can then modify. This is perfectly acceptable. However, ensure that the letter gives information from your recommender's point of view and refrain from heaping praise just for the sake of it. It is good to provide only partial drafts that the recommender can build upon to make the letter sound unique. If you write a full draft for each recommender, they may all sound the same and nullify the purpose they are required to serve.

### Keep these points in mind in case you have to draft a part of your LOR:

- Provide authentic and pertinent information
- Never copy from online samples
- Speak about your positive qualities and reinforce them with examples. Don't overdo the praise.
- Use simple sentences
- Double-check the letter of recommendation for grammatical errors
- Keep sentences short. Longer sentences that ramble impede the flow of the LOR and fail to convey the proper meaning to the concerned person
- LOR should be crisp and must not exceed 500-600 words overall
- The recommender must have known you for at least six months
- It should include accurate contact details of the recommender
- In a professional LOR, the recommender 'must discuss' your strengths and qualities and how it related to the role your performed.

Why not review our sample Letter of Recommendation here? If you are worried about whether you have got it right, read more about LOR Dos and Don'ts in this article.

## FAQs

### **How many letters of recommendation are needed and who should write them?**

Most institutions require applicants to submit three letters of recommendation from people who have known you academically. The recommenders must have a fair understanding of what you have studied in the past, your academic achievements and research interests. At least one of those writing a recommendation must be an instructor from the institution that you last attended. Prepare the LOR in the prescribed format.

### **How can I submit the LORs?**

The letters of recommendation must be submitted online along with other necessary documents. The letters can also be sent before the actual application. They will become part of the application record after submission.

### **How long should an LOR ideally be?**

Keep it short. A letter of recommendation should ideally be one page but not more than two.

### **How likely is the admission committee to get in touch with the recommender?**

The institution or university may email or call the recommender to confirm and discuss. In some cases, the university may only get back to the recommender with a thank you letter for providing useful insight about the student applying.