

**Department of Anthropology  
Western Oregon University  
Policy on Writing Letters of Recommendation**

Employers, graduate schools, granting agencies and awards programs rely upon personal letters of reference in their decision-making processes. Bear in mind that such a letter is earned and its contents are shaped by your every interaction with the writer from the time you first meet. Letters of reference are best requested in person, ideally in a face-to-face meeting during office hours. If you are out of town call until you reach your professor (do not leave a request on voice-mail) and follow up with a written summary of your request (email is fine), including relevant points outlined below.

You must supply your letter writer with the following:

1. A copy of your curriculum vitae (resumé).
2. Your student identification number (so that the faculty member can access your transcript online).
3. A description of the scholarship, job, or graduate program for which you are applying. Please specify what tasks you are expected to perform or what qualifications the program is seeking.
4. The address of the agency or department that you are applying to (and, if possible, the name and title of the person and/or committee that is in charge of making selection decisions).
5. The precise date on which you need the letter to be finished.
6. Information on how you want this letter sent: will you pick it up? should the department mail it? or, will your letter writer receive a link via email for uploading to the recipient?
7. Optional but very helpful: a list or summary of things that you have done in the Department of Anthropology that are of relevance (be specific: give titles, descriptions, and dates of papers, presentations, theses, internships, travel abroad, student recognition awards, school activities, and other evidence of your active involvement in the university and the department).

Important notes:

\* As a general rule, faculty members in the Department of Anthropology only write confidential letters of recommendation. This means that all letters are sealed and sent directly to the graduate school or potential employer. This is no reflection on the content of the letter or your value as a student; it is simply a standard policy that this department has adopted. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that you waive the right to view these letters of recommendation. Non-confidential letters are not taken as seriously as confidential letters, and committees prefer an open and frank assessment of their candidates.

\*Please be sure to go over any forms you supply your referee and fill out your part in advance; sign if necessary.

\* You must give the faculty member at least one week to write this letter, preferably two. If the letter is of extreme importance to you, we suggest that you Email the faculty member a reminder one day before it is to be sent off.

\* We care about your success and would like to hear the outcome of your application. If results are negative, we will sympathize and strategize with you. Bear in mind that once a letter is written, it is easy to tweak it and produce additional letters for second or third go-arounds. Don't be reluctant to ask!