**Reference Letter(s) From Plunk – Super important information!**

* You should ask your letter writers **4-8 weeks before** the recommendations are due. I complete 300-450 recommendations each year. Thus, I need to find time in my very busy schedule to complete the recommendations; especially for big deadlines (e.g., 12/1, 12/15, 1/1, 1/15, 2/1).
* If you are applying for multiple programs spread out over a couple of months (e.g., November 15 to January 1 deadlines), then **submit your online letter requests early and around the same date** (regardless of deadline). The reason is that it saves me a lot of time writing the letters when I can open up all the information on you at once, and then focus just on letters for you. Thus, I don’t have to reopen your letter, form, transcript, etc. each time I am writing a new letter and completing the evaluation forms. Also, if I have letter requests trickling in every few days or weeks, it makes it more challenging for me to find time to do your letters.
* I will keep the letter on my computer for future reference.
* Fill in my information below on the forms. This will help me finish the letters in a timely manner. The easier you make it for your letter writers, the quicker they can complete all the letters.

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* When you send me your information, **delete all text in the document except your form** (either job or grad school form) and the questions with your answers.
* Title the document with YOUR name and “form” (e.g., Plunkett\_Scott\_Form.docx).
* Also, send me a copy of your resume or vita (e.g., Plunkett\_Scott\_Resume.pdf).
* If your GPA is below 3.5, send me a copy of your transcripts or degree progress report. This way I can

**Your Name here:**

**Form for Jobs** (replace text with your information)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Position Title** | **Address (if relevant)** | **Deadline** | **Delivery** | **Additional Comments** |
| Child Placement Coordinator | Jane Smith, MSW  Director  Youth & Family Services  Northridge, CA 91330 | 12/01/07 | Mail to  organization | Requires fluency in Spanish – I am fluent.  Wants 2 years experience working with adolescents. I was a high school math teacher for 3 years in LAUSD. |
| School Counselor | Jane Smith, Ph.D.  Superintendent  ABC Senior High School  Los Angeles, CA 90000 | 11/15/07 | I will pick letter up | Requires 2 years of teaching experience. I was a high school math teacher for 3 years in LAUSD |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Form for Graduate Programs** (replace text with your information)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **University**  (don’t abbreviate) | **Program**  (exactly as it is listed on the program webpage) | **Degree** | **Deadline** |
| California State University Northridge | Marriage and Family Therapy | Masters | 12/01/07 |
| University of California Los Angeles | Clinical Psychology | Ph.D. | 11/15/07 |
| Alliant International University | Cultural Clinical Psychology | PsyD | 1/21/08 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**When did we first meet, and in what capacity?** (replace with your information)

I came to you for advising in September 2007, and/or I was in your PSY 460 class in Fall 2022.

**What class(es) did you take with me, what semester, and what grade(s) did you receive?** (replace with your information)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Title** | **Semester Year** | **Grade** |
| PSY 460 | Counseling and interviewing | Spring 2007 | A- |
| PSY 442 | Communication and Conflict Resolution | Fall 2008 | A |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Is there any other information you want me to know?** (replace with your information)

My GPA was low until I switched majors from bowling to astrophysics. After switching to astrophysics, my GPA went from 1.5 to 3.8.

I volunteered for 2 years at Saving Bigfoot from Extinction, Inc.

I worked on your research project for 2 semesters as a keyboard cleaner.

I speak fluent Pig Latin and Klingon.

Read all the information below. Then delete before sending me the information above.

# General Information About References

*“What someone says about you has a much greater impact than what you say about yourself.”*

## Important Considerations Regarding References

* Always seek permission from references before listing them on an application or reference list.
* Advise references any time you give out their names for a job.
* Tell the reference who will be calling, the nature of the position, your qualifications, any special areas of employer interest or concern.
* This allows the reference to tailor the recommendation toward the specific job position.
* Ask the reference to notify you when they are contacted.

## Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School

* In general, the best references for graduate programs are current or past professors.
* Ideally, these professors will be tenure-track or tenured professors (e.g., assistant professor, associate professor, full professor).
* If you get a letter from a part-time faculty member / lecturer, it is best if they have the level of degree for which you are applying (i.e., at least a master’s degree for a master’s program and a doctoral degree for a doctoral program).
* Try to avoid getting letters from graduate student teaching assistants or graduate student research supervisors.
* In general, at least 2 letters should be from faculty members who can attest to your potential to succeed in graduate school.
* The best letters are from faculty members who have had considerable contact with you, especially in a non-classroom setting, and/or worked with you professionally (e.g., thesis chair, thesis committee, research supervisor, co-authored a paper or conference presentation with you; adviser to you in your role as an officer in a campus organization; worked with you on a community project).
* Some graduate programs (e.g., social work) often require a letter from a faculty member as well as a letter from a current/past supervisor. Thus, if you have work or volunteer experience in the field, you could have a current or past supervisor write one of the reference letters.
* Do not include letters from public officials, religious leaders, or lay people, unless they can attest first-hand to your academic capabilities, research skills, or professional abilities.
* Develop a positive relationship with at least 3 or 4 of your professors.
* Stop by their office hours when you are in their class.
* Briefly stop by their office hours after you are no longer in their class.
* Talk with them outside of class will allow them to customize their letters with information beyond your class performance.
* Ask potential references if they can write a write a strong letter of recommendation.
* Ask your references cordially and formally.
* Note from Plunkett: I believe it is the responsibility of faculty members to be available to write letters for students. However, I also believe it is their responsibility to be honest when composing the letter. So, if you received a good grade in the class, but you came in late to every class, then expect the letter to represent both characteristics.
* Do not wait until the last minute to ask for letters. Ask references if they can write the letters well before the deadline (at least 4-8 weeks before the application is due).
* If letter writers hint they does not have much to say about you, that they have a few concerns, or do not have time, then politely thank them and ask someone else. It is possible they were hinting they not feel comfortable writing a letter for you.
* Provide your references with very brief and clear instructions (e.g., contact person at the graduate program, title, deadline)
* Letters of reference are not necessarily a high priority for your references; therefore, make the process as easy as possible for your references.
* Forms should be filled out completely.
* If you are applying to multiple programs, submit your materials to the programs around the same time. This way, your references are not getting email links spread-out across weeks or months.
* Note from Plunkett: When I complete references from students, I want to complete all the letters all at once for that student. This also helps me plan my time and keeps me organized. When the reference requests come sporadically, it is much easier for me to miss a deadline.
* Tell your references the exact program deadline for the letters.
* Send a short, polite, and friendly reminder about the deadline one week before the letters are due.
* Send a friendly reminder the day before the letters are due.
* After the application process is finished, follow up with a “thank you” card/email. You do not need to give a gift to academic letter writers.
* After you hear back from all programs and/or make your decision, then inform your letter writers about the outcome.