ASKING FOR REFERENCES FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

CULTIVATE ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS

What does this mean?
• Actively participate in class.
• Speak with instructors during office hours.
• Demonstrate to your instructors that you are a professional student.

CONSIDER WHO TO ASK

• Does this professor know my strengths from experiences within the classroom?
• Have I always acted professionally and ethically in this professor’s course?
• Can this professor comment on my academic development?
• Have I done well in this instructor’s course?

GIVE THE WRITER PLENTY OF TIME!!!

You want your recommendations to be well-considered. This cannot be done two days before your application is due.

Ask approximately one month before your recommendation is needed.

PREPARE INFORMATION FOR YOUR REFERENCES

The best references are the most specific to you and the position you are applying for. Include:
• Information about the opportunity for which you’re applying.
• Why it’s important to you.
• Your activities and qualifications for the position.
• A detailed explanation of how and when to submit the recommendation.

SEND AN EMAIL

Sometimes it can be difficult to ask in person, so you can send an email. BUT, make sure to keep it short and to the point.
Refresh her/his memory: Think of a positive interaction you had. Tell her/him which semester and class you were in.

Explain why you are asking her/him: Be specific. What skill, strength, or experience can that instructor speak to?

Offer to meet with her/him to discuss details: Offer to meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss your request. This is when you could give your instructor your additional information you’ve prepared.

Make sure you THANK HER/HIM!!: Not only should you thank your instructor for considering your request, you should also thank her/him after it’s written. Handwritten thank-yous are always appreciated.

Give your instructor a way out: You are asking for a strong recommendation, so if this instructor can’t provide it, you need to know. Do not ask, Can you write me a recommendation letter? The answer is yes, but you want more than that: Would you be able to write me a strong letter of recommendation for my [scholarship] applications?

Professor Snape,

My name is Sarah Scheufele, and I took your Potions class my first year at Hogwarts. I frequently attended your office hours, as your class was a challenging but enjoyable subject. I also enjoyed participating in the ethical discussions you proposed in class and felt they challenged my critical thinking skills.

I am currently in the process of applying for the LLCC Foundation Scholarships, and I am gathering letters of recommendation. Because I felt I grew as a student in your class and demonstrated my ability to engage in academic discussions, I chose to ask you. I hoped you could speak to my willingness and excitement about learning.

Would you be able to write a strong recommendation letter for my scholarship applications? They are due March 1, 2017.

I would be available to meet with you at your convenience if that would be helpful. I would also provide my personal statement, resume, and other materials you’d find helpful.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request,

Sarah Scheufele
(217)786-4618

Be prepared for your instructor to decline. It’s ok. It might mean s/he is too busy to write a well-written recommendation; it might mean your instructor doesn’t feel like s/he can write a strong recommendation for you. You want your recommendations to be as strong as possible, so it’s better to know now that s/he wouldn’t be the best choice.