Law School Applications 101: Getting Good Letters of Recommendation

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Objectives

- Letter Content
- Letter Writers
- Letter Procurement
- Letter Collection
- Q & A
Content of the Letters

- Closeness of the relationship
- Skill development and execution through specific examples of your work
- Character/personal qualities
- Comparison to peers
- Strong endorsement of your candidacy
Content of the Letters

- Academic ability
- Analytical and logical reasoning ability
- Critical and creative thinking ability
- Writing and communication skills
- Research skills
- Teamwork or leadership skills
- Professionalism and maturity
Choosing Recommenders

- What have you done?
  - Coursework
  - Professional experience
  - Research experience
  - Community service/volunteerism
  - Extracurricular activities

- Who do you know?
  - Professors
  - Employers
  - Other supervisors and advisors
Choosing Recommenders

- What’s working in my file?
  - Good experience
  - Strong involvement/leadership
  - Strong academic performance

- What’s missing from my file?
  - Lower than expected LSAT score
  - Grade anomalies
  - Lack of experience/involvement
Choosing Recommenders

- Important tips!
  - Most schools only require 2 letters. Can secure at least 3 letters as insurance.
  - Do not choose prominence over closeness.
  - The rank and department of the faculty member is not important.
  - Consider choosing faculty from your upper-level courses, as they can comment on more-demanding work.
Asking for the Letter

- Ask in person, when possible.
  - Easier for them to remember you
  - Opportunity for dialogue about the letter
  - Assess whether they have adequate time to write the letter

- Be prepared to discuss your qualifications and why you have chosen them.
  - What you learned from them that relates to law school
  - How they can specifically add to your file (i.e. talking points)
Asking for the Letter

- Be prepared with information to assist the recommender:
  - Cover letter
  - Resume
  - Unofficial transcript
  - Personal statement
  - LSAC Letter of Recommendation Form (required)
  - Pre-addressed envelope with postage
  - Deadline for letter submission (at least 2 wks. before your personal completion deadline)

- Try to have all meetings done by late September. Should give them at least 4-6 weeks to write and mail the letter.
Collecting the Letters

- LSAC Letter of Recommendation Service
  - Should be used to collect all letters.
  - Input the names of all recommenders into your CAS account. A letter ID will be assigned to each entry.
  - Unless the recommender is writing a school-specific letter, all letters should be marked as “for general use” in the Description box.
  - If recommender is mailing their letter, click the “Print” button next to their name to print out the LSAC Letter Form. Give this to recommender to include with their letter. LSAC requires Letter Form to be submitted with each letter. Recommenders send their letter directly to LSAC.
  - If recommender is submitting online, click the “Email” button next to their name. Input their email address and LSAC will send them directions on how to submit the letter electronically. Letter Form will be included.
  - Will assign letters to each school’s application through your CAS account when you fill out the application.
LSAC Evaluation Service

- Recommenders vs. Evaluators
  - Recommenders write paper letters
  - Evaluators complete online assessments
- Evaluator will receive an email from LSAC requesting them to complete the evaluation for the applicant.
- Online assessment of 30 individual attributes and skills in 6 categories:
  - Intellectual skill
  - Personal qualities
  - Integrity and honesty
  - Communication
  - Task management
  - Working with others
- Space is allotted for text at the end of the assessment.
- Evaluations are placed in the CAS file along with letters of recommendation.
- BOTTOM LINE: Unless a school requires an evaluation, skip it!
Following Up

- Stay in contact with your recommenders!!!
- Send a hand-written “Thank You” a couple of weeks before your deadline. Can serve as a reminder to them if they haven’t submitted the letter yet.
- Notify your recommenders if your plans change and you are no longer applying.
- Inform them of the outcomes of the process.
- Send a formal “Thank You” after the process is completed.
The Pre-Law Advising Office

The Career Center
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Be sure to meet with the Pre-Law Advisor as needed to get your application questions answered!