

## Mathiowetz's Letter of Recommendation FAQ

Writing letters of recommendation for undergraduate students who have been in my classes and for my graduate advisees is an important and regular part of my job. Below are some requirements and guidelines you should be aware of so that our collaborative effort on your letter can be as productive as possible.

### **Will you write me a letter?**

The qualifications I require in order to write a letter vary by the type of letter and the student. I judge each request on its merits, but what follows are guidelines for you to consider when deciding whether I am the right person for you to ask for a letter.

Undergraduate Students: Letters for study abroad and UCDC are straightforward. I will write such a letter for most students who have enrolled in my class and done good (usually "B" or better) work. Of course, the better your work in the course, the stronger your letter will be. If you need a letter for law or professional school, I should be personally familiar with you. You should be a regular participant in classroom discussion or an active visitor to my office hours; ideally, both. If you would like a letter for a Ph.D. program, you should have done excellent ("A"-level) work in my course, and I should be familiar with your intellectual rigor and creativity, and with your written and verbal skills from regular interactions in class and office hours. Also, we need to have an in-person discussion of your plans and options well in advance of letter-writing season.

Graduate Students: I write letters for my advisees as a matter of course. However, I must be in possession of the relevant materials (proposals, cover letters, etc.) in plenty of time to write the kind of letter that your work and the award or position deserves. In many cases, I will want to work with you on the proposal or cover letter. If we do not have sufficient time for this collaborative work, I may have to submit for you a recycled or perfunctory letter that will not serve your application well.

### **How much time do you need?**

I generally set aside time every two weeks to write letters. For programs that require you to submit a personal statement, I need to have time to review your materials (see below) and, possibly, get answers from you to questions or concerns I have about those materials, in plenty of time for me to schedule your letter in my letter-writing days. I may also request that you re-write your statement before I write the letter. With all of this in mind, you should plan to have all of the relevant materials in my hands a minimum of three weeks before the letter is due. It's likely therefore that your request should come sooner. And, you should plan to be promptly responsive to e-mail throughout the time that I am writing you a letter, or your recommendation may fall by the wayside.

You should also be aware that fall is an extraordinarily busy time for letter-writing. At some point, I may have committed myself to as many letters as I can write well at any

given time. So if you are looking at a fall deadline, you should be even more proactive about requesting a letter.

### **What materials are required?**

If I have agreed to write you a letter, please bring or send me a 9x11 envelope containing all of the materials in support of your application at once.

1. A list of program(s) to which you're applying, noting deadlines, with the earliest deadline listed first and in bold type.
2. A draft of your statement of purpose, proposal, or cover letter for the application(s)
3. Photocopies of papers you've written for my class, including my comments (or the TA's comments)
4. Copies of your UCSC narrative evaluations (if applicable), and other transcripts
5. A short annotated resume of your extracurricular activities, achievements, and work history; for graduate students, an updated CV.
6. Some indication that you have waived your rights under FERPA to view the letter. When a confidential letter of recommendation is an option, I will only write a letter for you if you choose to keep the letter between me and the admissions body confidential.
7. Anything else you think is relevant.

It's important to me that all the materials arrive together, in paper copy. Be sure to seal the materials in an envelope that is clearly but neatly marked with my full name in one modest corner (if the envelope can be reused in campus mail, it's good for the earth and all of its creatures) and then send me an e-mail notifying me of the delivery.

If any of the forms I need to submit with your letter require me to fill out contact information, please fill out my portion in advance with this data:

Name: Dean Mathiowetz	Position: Associate Professor
Department: Politics	University: University of California, Santa Cruz
Address: Merrill Faculty Services, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064	
Phone: 831-459-1359	email: <a href="mailto:dpmath@ucsc.edu">dpmath@ucsc.edu</a>

Lastly, it is very helpful to me if you will send me friendly but persistent reminders of the deadline for the letter I have promised to write you, and continue the reminders until I have replied that the letter(s) is/are done. I'd be grateful!