How to Get a Letter of Reference From Dr. Cromer

Sometimes I’m asked to write a lot of recommendations for students, and to keep the work load manageable I ask for the following from everyone. These instructions are written primarily for students applying to graduate and professional school, but they can be applied to other needs such as summer internships, etc. The first step is asking me if I am able and willing to write a letter for you. Reasons I might say no include the timing of your request (if you don't give me enough time, I might have to say no) or because I feel I don't know you well enough to write a meaningful letter. If I do agree to write a letter for you, the following steps apply:

1) First, I need your request that I write a letter for you in writing. Email is fine. This requirement helps me keep track of things, and also demonstrates that I have your consent to talk about you to someone else.

All the materials you will be providing me (listed below) needs to be in hard copy format submitted in a manila envelope.

2) Second, please give me a complete list of schools or jobs, etc., to which you are applying with deadlines. Put your name and the date on the top of the sheet and include the following information divided into 3 columns: 1) School, 2) Electronic or mail submission format, 3) Deadline. I need all of these at ONE TIME. It is not okay to send multiple emails with multiple requests. I often am writing reference letters for several people at the same time (sometimes to the same institutions), and need for you to be organized so that I can stay organized.

3) Please do give me copies of your transcript, test scores (GRES/LSATS/etc.), your resume, and application essay (and anything else that will be part of your standard application package). Give me whatever you have so far for your application. [The better informed I am about your application, including strengths and weaknesses and particular interests, the more compelling letter I can write for you. Students sometimes want to avoid showing weaknesses to recommenders, but in fact if I am informed about the contents of the application I can write a letter that helps compensate or argue against negative indicators such as low scores or grades.]

4) If applicable, I will also need the forms and pre-addressed stamped envelopes for all the schools/recipient. BE SURE TO COMPLETE YOUR PART OF THE FORM FIRST AND SIGN IT WHERE REQUIRED. Double check this please (it slows down the process very much if I have to return forms to you for you to complete or sign before I can fill them in). If there is a school without a specific form, please include a note to that effect attached to the envelope. Each form (or note) should be paper clipped to the corresponding envelope. Some schools will have electronic forms to complete. If this is the case, you should (a) include them on the written list of schools that you give me, and (b) highlight that this will be electronic only, and say “email from institution to follow.” No envelope is required for electronic applications.

5) Please give me the materials at least 2 working weeks* before the first deadline if at all possible (*if a winter or spring break is involved then I need extra time). Sometimes I can complete things faster, but please don’t count on it. I want to do a good job for each one of you.

adapted from J.J. Freyd