

# *LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION*

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Letters of recommendation are an important part of your application. Once the medical or dental schools review your GPA and MCAT/DAT scores, they want to see the person behind the numbers. Review the chapter on “What Medical And Dental Schools Are Looking For” and request letters from professors or volunteer/research colleagues who can speak to your integrity, maturity, responsibility and other traits valued by the school.

These are the qualities your recommender should highlight in his or her letter:

- The letter should make it clear that they know you well
- That they've known you long enough to write with authority
- That they are confident that they know the caliber of your work They can describe your work positively
- They have a high opinion of you
- They know where you are applying (i.e., medical school, dental school, osteopathic school)
- They know your educational and career goals
- They should be able to favorably compare you with your peers
- Letters should be on letterhead, signed, and dated

## **RECOMMENDATION LETTERS REQUIRED OF PRE-MEDICAL APPLICANTS**

The required breakdown of letters is a guideline. It is highly suggested that you request more letters on your behalf, which gives the Pre-Health Advisor more flexibility in deciding which letters to include with your Committee Letter.

A minimum of 7 letters are required for medical school applicants—

Three (3) letters from YU science professors (ideally only one from a lab instructor).  
Two (2) letters from non-science professors (one from major)

One (1) letter from someone who can comment on your performance and the number of hours you served as a volunteer in a clinical setting. (120 to 150 hours in an ER or comparable setting is standard) NOTE: A letter from a family friend you shadowed for a few hours is not sufficient, nor is occasional shadowing considered sufficient exposure to clinical practices.

One (1) letter from your supervisor in clinical or wet lab research.

NOTE: Students applying to osteopathic schools should include one letter of reference from a DO whom they have shadowed.

## **RECOMMENDATION LETTERS REQUIRED OF PRE-DENTAL APPLICANTS**

A minimum of 4 letters are required for all dental school applicants—

Two (2) letters from science professors (try to have only one from a lab instructor)

One (1) from a non-science professor

One (1) from a dentist you have shadowed. NOTE: A letter from a family friend you shadowed for a few hours is not sufficient, nor is shadowing occasionally sufficient exposure to clinical practices.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITES**

Extracurricular activities are a big part of your college career. They show your outside interests and passions, and also help to demonstrate the traits medical and dental schools value, i.e., service orientation, stretching outside your “comfort zone.” Request a letter from someone who worked closely with you in the activity and who can speak to these qualities.

## **MORE IS BETTER**

Please note that the numbers listed above are the minimum requirements. Whenever possible, request more than the minimum amount of recommendations listed below. This allows the Pre-Health Advisor the most options when finalizing the best packet to send on your behalf to the schools.

## **REQUESTING A LETTER**

### **Academic References**

As you plan your coursework for the semester, decide which professors you will need a recommendation letter from. Mention early in the semester (before the first exam) that you are on the pre-health track and would hope to receive a recommendation letter. Many professors require that you take two courses before they write a letter or that you schedule time with them to discuss your background and future plans. Learn their particular requirements early and be sure to meet them. During the course, make a point to go “above and beyond” what is expected, i.e., help classmates with experiments. As the course nears its end, remind the professor about the letter and be sure it is submitted to the Pre-Health

Office before or shortly after the class concludes. It's up to you to be pro-active without being a "nudge!"

### **Volunteer, Research, or Extracurricular References**

The same basic procedures apply to letter from sources outside of YU. Early in your experience, mention that you are in the pre-health track and would hope to receive a letter of reference. Throughout the experience, maintain a relationship with your supervisor or someone you worked closely with who can attest to your responsibility, integrity, and other traits. As the experience nears its end, remind them about the letter and provide them with the waiver form.

## **SOONER THE BETTER**

Don't wait until your application year to request your letters! Ask professors now so you don't have to return to faculty members you might not have seen in years. Once the Pre-Health Office starts receiving these letters, they will open a file for you and maintain these letters until you're ready to apply. This is one aspect of the application process you can finalize ahead of time.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Health professional schools want to know that the letter has been confidential throughout the process. Therefore, a student requests the letter and then never sees it again. The Pre-Health Office is responsible for reviewing the letters and eventually selecting the strongest ones to include with your application. The first step is to obtain a waiver form from the Pre-Health Office or copy the form included in this booklet. The same form is used for both faculty or off-campus volunteer or research. It is best to waive the right to view the letters since most Admissions Committee prefer a totally confidential and unbiased assessment.

## **USE YOUR LEGAL NAME**

Do not use a nickname. If you've used a nickname at Yeshiva that your teachers or employers know you by, use your legal name in asking for letters of recommendation. Point out to the referees that you're known as Avi but your name is Jonathan Abraham Green, not Avi Green. You should use your legal name for your Yeshiva College transcript and diploma, and it will go on your professional school diploma and licenses. If you don't use your legal name, letters could be misfiled in admissions offices and your application could be delayed. It will also be difficult to straighten this out later, which the professional schools will require you to do. If you want to change your legal name, arrange to do so now through the courts.

## **DO'S AND DON'TS**

Do have the referee-

- Submit the letter on letterhead
- Date and sign the letter
- Address it to "Dear Members of the Admissions Committee"

Don't-

- Send the letter via e-mail (unless it is a pdf attachment which is also signed, dated and on letterhead).
- Handwrite the letter

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