*Read these requests for a letter of recommendation (below). If you were the professor, which student would you be most willing to recommend?*

**Example 1:** From: davidkooldude@yahoo.com

Yo teach! I know it’s been a while, but I’m applyin to this program at NEIUC and I need a letter of recommendation. Will you write one for me? The directions aren’t real clear so just whatever you want to say is fine. I know this is short notice but I need it tomorrow lol. Lemme know when I can pick it up.

David

**Example 2:** From: dstudent12@student.ccc.edu

Hello Professor Ritt,

I loved your English 101 so much! You are my favorite professor ever and I really loved your class. I know I missed a lot of work and was absent a lot, but it was really fun. I need a really huge favor and you’re the only person who can help me. Can you write me a letter of recommendation for admittance to Northern Illinois University? I want to be a science major there. I know it’s midterms at school right now, but if I could get it maybe within 24 hours, that’d be awesome.

Thanks so much from your favorite student!

David Student

**Example 3:** From: dstudent12@student.ccc.edu

Hello Professor Ritt,

It’s been a while since our English 101 course last fall semester. I hope that this note finds you well. I am writing today to ask you a favor. I am applying for admission to a creative writing program at the University of Illinois, and I was wondering if you would be willing to write me a letter of recommendation. Your class really helped me find my voice as a writer, and it would mean a lot to me to have your support.

The directions for the letter are pretty general, but I’ve attached them to this email just in case. Letters may be submitted via the online application form (I’ve provided the link below). The deadline for admissions is four weeks away; if it would be possible to receive the letter in the next few weeks, I would be very grateful. Please let me know if it will be possible for you to help me with this.

Thank you for everything,

David Student

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**When asking for a letter of recommendation…**

* **Don’t** wait too long. Give the professor as much time as possible to reply (after all, do you really want them to rush something this important?). Keep in mind that professors, just like students, are also busier around midterms and finals, and may not be able to help if the deadline is too tight.
* **Do** ask professors who know you well or were particularly influential in your education. The more you impressed them, the more positive things they’ll have to write on your behalf!
* **Do** ask a professor who teaches in the field you’d like to major in (if possible). An English teacher might be able to say that as a prospective science major, you’re a responsible student and capable of editing your lab reports, but he or she couldn’t necessarily comment on your lab skills or other major-specific qualifications the way your biology professor could.
* **Do** have a back-up plan in case your first-choice letter writer is unavailable.
* **Don’t** forget to spell-check! If you want your professor to spend his or her time on you, the least you can do is spend a few minutes on the request and show your academic editing skills (plus it makes you look much more serious about your education). Similarly, avoid “text-speak” (like “lol”, etc); it’s a pet peeve of most professors, and it makes you sound like you’re joking around. Use your school (.edu) email address for the same reason.
* **Don’t** overdo it with the compliments; most teachers will remember if you slept through their class all the time and won’t buy that it was your “favorite”. (But **do** feel free to mention any particularly important or positive experiences you had in the class—a meaningful assignment or a conversation with the professor that stands out to you).
* **Do** supply all the info the professor will need to write the recommendation, including…
	+ Your full name
	+ The name of the course and the semester you had the professor
	+ The full name of the school and program you’re applying to
	+ The deadline for the letter
	+ Whether the letter should be sent electronically or by mail (if electronic, include email or link for submission; if by mail, say how many copies are requested and include the address)
	+ Any requirements for the letter (such as a specific request from the school to mention extracurricular activities, writing skills, etc). You could also include the letter prompt if one was provided.
* **Don’t** assume the professor will agree to write the letter (it comes off as presumptuous), but **do** know that most professors are pleased to be asked and will be happy to help. We all want to see our students succeed!
* **Do** remember to say thank you (and let us know when you get admitted!). ☺