

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

It is in your interest to make it as easy as possible for your letter-writers to do their job well and on time. Here are some guidelines for students considering asking me for a letter.

- Ask at least three weeks before your earliest deadline, preferably much earlier. (If I have already written a letter for you in the past, this does not apply.)
- In one email, send me your transcript (unofficial is fine), application essays (drafts are fine), CV/resume, and any additional information you think would help me write a supportive letter. In that email, also include a list of the programs to which you are applying and the deadlines, from earliest to latest.
- Most applications are electronic, and letters can typically be requested as soon as you have started (not completed) an application. For any non-electronic applications, please bring me an addressed envelope with correct postage. Either way, I usually require that you get the electronic forms or paper forms to me **at least two weeks before** the deadline. (If you require a faster turnaround, please discuss with me first.)
- Before asking me to write a letter to support your application to **pure mathematics PhD programs**, you should have completed a year-long pure mathematics sequence at the 400/500-level or above. You should also have completed at least one class at the 400 level or above with me, with a grade of at least A-. Without these, I am unlikely to be able to write a sufficiently strong letter for admission to a good pure mathematics PhD program. If there is a reason you believe I can nevertheless make a compelling case on your behalf, you must explain it clearly in an email to me.
- If you did poorly in my class, it usually would be better to ask someone else instead of me for a letter. If there is a reason you believe I can nevertheless make a compelling case on your behalf, you must explain it clearly in an email to me.
- You must waive your right to see my letters. (This applies to any place FERPA or similar restrictions apply.) If you do not do this, I will not submit the letter.
- If I cannot write a sufficiently strong letter for the program to which you are applying, I will let you know. I am too overcommitted to spend time writing an unhelpful letter.
- If you have not received confirmation I have submitted your letter, please email me a reminder 10 days before the deadline, 5 days before the deadline, and each day thereafter until the letter is submitted.
- Remember to tell your letter-writers the outcome (e.g. acceptances).

These guidelines are based on similar tips from the webpages of Keith Conrad, Robert Pollack, Ravi Vakil, and Melanie Wood.