I. About Recommendations...

Asking for a recommendation should be approached with respect for the good will, time and energy that will go into writing it. Above all, that means providing all the information your recommender might need, and doing so in a timely manner.

Tell your potential recommenders as early as possible that you are applying for a fellowship and will be asking for a recommendation, then follow up with as much advance notice as possible before the recommendation is due. Under no circumstances should you expect to receive a decent letter of recommendation with less than one week's notice!

Nobody is obliged to provide a recommendation for you, and some of your potential recommenders may say no to your request. If that happens, you should accept the refusal graciously and move on to asking an alternate recommender. You want only those who believe they can write a sufficiently strong recommendation for you to do so! If someone says no, it is likely because they cannot, and that could be due to any number of circumstances (they don't know you well enough, they don't have enough time to do it, they don't feel qualified to address the criteria of the award, you did not do well in a class they taught or an activity they supervised, etc.). They may be willing to write a recommendation for you for something else some day, so be sure to thank them for their consideration of your request!

If you are visiting recommenders in person, you can hand each of them a portfolio of materials; for email requests, supply attachments and offer to drop off or mail hard copies.

Be sure to provide the following to people who have agreed to provide a recommendation for you:

- an acknowledgment of your gratitude that they are willing to write on your behalf; if you asked a particular individual for a particular reason, mention it (for example, “I am especially grateful that you are willing to write on my behalf, since you know me well from our off-campus program/in a lab setting/when we went to the conference together/our many conversations about life, the universe and all that...

- links to information about the fellowship(s) you’re applying for;
- complete what you can on any form provided for the recommendation (fill out your name, their name, contact information, etc.) — a small courtesy that is always appreciated;
- information about the specific program(s) you will be applying to, if relevant (for example, if you are a Marshall applicant, the specific degree(s), department, and university);
- (especially if you are applying for several opportunities), a clear explanation of what is required or expected for each recommendation so that the recommender can customize the letter(s) of recommendation (or form(s), as the case may be);
- a copy of your CV/resume;
- a copy of your transcript;
- a copy of your application materials (drafts are ok! Let your recommender(s) know that they are in draft form and that you would welcome suggestions for improvement if they want to offer any, but don’t expect that they have time or energy to do so);
- information about how the recommendation is to be delivered (“I understand that you will have/already have/will receive a link from XYZ to upload the recommendation”) and about deadlines (including any on-campus deadlines).
- Marynel’s contact information (mryanvanzee@carleton.edu, 507 222 4300) in case anyone runs into difficulty with some aspect of the recommendation;
- any other background material about you that you think would help the recommender write a strong and effective recommendation;
- and an offer to meet (in person, over the phone) to talk further if that would be helpful.

It doesn’t hurt to end with another thank you! Keep in mind that recommenders are putting their reputations on the line by recommending you, and that writing a responsible recommendation is hard work.
II. About Waivers...

Many recommendation forms and programs ask you if you waive your right to see the recommendation. Although you are not obligated to do so, we recommend strongly that you do for two important reasons. The first is that letters written with the protection of confidentiality are always taken more seriously than letters a student/applicant might see. The second is that some people in a position to write letters of recommendations will simply not do so if the student/applicant has not waived the right to see the recommendation.

The Office of Student Fellowships may also request that you sign a waiver allowing the discussion of your academic record and other pertinent information in our review of your application materials, particularly if you are a Carleton nominee for a national or international fellowship.