Writing an Email to a Professor

- Use a descriptive subject line.
  Request for a space in your class (NOT "Hey Professor")

- Start with a formal greeting – "Dear" is always appropriate. Unless the professor has explicitly told you otherwise, address them by their title.
  Dear Professor Williams, (NOT "Hi Harry")

- If you have not emailed the professor before, are in a large class, or are starting off a new term, identify yourself.
  I am a senior history major who is interested in taking your class on...

- Explain why you are writing and be concise. If you are asking for a favor or for help, recognize that the professor is not obligated to say yes.
  I am currently on the waitlist. I am wondering if it would be possible to sit in on the first session of your class in case a spot opens up.

- Sign off in a way that matches your formality throughout. "Many thanks," "Best," and "All the best" are usually sure bets. If your professor does not know you or is recently acquainted with you, use your full name.
  Many thanks,
  Larry Gould

---

How to Ask for a Recommendation

- Read "Writing an Email to a Professor" on the reverse side of this handout

- Ask early and be clear about when the recommendation is due
  Writing an effective letter takes more time and thought than you probably realize. Rushing a professor or staff member might lead to a letter that is not as positive or as detailed as it could be. If you decide not to apply for something, let your prof know so they don't spend time crafting a letter you no longer need. A positive recommendation experience rests upon regular, clear, timely, and complete communication between you and the prof.

- Ask, "Do you feel you know me well enough to write a recommendation?"
  Letters with few details and only generic comments typically don't carry much weight with readers. Remind the letter writer what course(s) you took with them, what projects you worked on, etc.

- Provide relevant information and context
  Tell your letter writer what you're applying for and why you're applying. Offer the writer a copy of your resume or CV. If the application requires a cover letter, proposal, or personal statement, offer to share a rough draft of it. ("If you're willing and able to support my application, I'll follow up with my resume and a rough draft of my research proposal.")

- Check in a week before the recommendation is due
  Faculty and staff have a lot going on and occasionally lose track of recommendation due dates. They usually appreciate a gentle reminder. ("I'm sending this email to ask if you need any additional information from me for the recommendation that is due in a week.")

- Show appreciation for your recommender's time and willingness to help
  Check out the Writing Center's handout titled "Writing a Thank You Note to Professors, Alumni, and Potential Employers." Stop by the Writing Center for free thank-you cards!

- Follow up
  Let your recommender know if you were successful in your application. Even if you weren't, send a note to your recommender and describe what you learned from the application process. They've had both failures and successes and will probably be happy to share both kinds of experiences with you.

---

Top Tips

1. Err on the side of formality
2. Express your appreciation
3. If you're going to ask for help or a favor, ask early
4. Don't use emoticons
5. Keep it short

---

Top Tips

1. Ask as early in the application process as possible
2. Be clear about the deadline for the recommendation
3. Provide information and context
4. Express your appreciation