Modern Languages professors receive many requests for letters of recommendation because our relatively small and highly interactive classes allow us to know our students by their first names and on a personal level. While we are happy to help our students win scholarships, enter graduate school, begin a career, etc., common courtesy must be followed in asking a favor that requires such a significant time commitment. We take the writing of letters of recommendation very seriously, and expect our students to do the same. Please respect the following protocol to achieve the best results:

1. Ask for a letter well before the due date. Give at least 2-4 weeks notice.
2. Choose your references (referees) wisely.
   a. Make sure it’s someone who knows you well. For instance, ask a professor to write a letter for you if you traveled with him/her on a study abroad program, if you’ve performed well in a few of his/her classes, if you are active in a club for which he/she is an advisor, etc.
   b. Make sure this recommender is the appropriate choice for the kind of recommendation needed. Modern Languages professors can assess your language skills, your classroom behavior, and many other qualities, but if the letter writer needs to speak about your athletic performance, choose someone in this field.
3. Ask politely. Write a formal e-mail request.
   a. Do not just drop off forms.
   b. Do not write a short, informal e-mail, with no proper greeting, stating, “I need a letter of recommendation by Friday.”
   c. Do not assume the professor will say yes. You are asking for a big favor, so be sensitive and gracious.
4. If your professor agrees to write the letter, prepare a folder (or a manila envelope) for your request. Put in the folder/envelope:
   a. The “Department of Modern Languages Letter of Recommendation Request Form,” filled out to the best of your ability, bearing in mind that the more information you give us, the easier our task will be.
   b. The waiver form (waiving your rights to see the letter). Recipients have more faith in letters the students have not seen.
   c. A pre-stamped and addressed envelope (check to see if your recommender would like this)
   d. Your updated résumé (not limited to academic pursuits)
   e. Any other supporting documents requested by the recipient (letter of interest, statement of purpose, writing sample, etc.)

5. Even if you are applying online:
   a. Follow the same etiquette for asking for the letter.
   b. Give your recommender all of the documents listed above (without the stamped envelope) in a folder or a manila envelope.
   c. You will most likely have to fill in an electronic waiver form and send your recommender a link. Make sure to fill in the recommender’s information so he/she doesn’t have to do it him/herself.

6. If you want your professor to serve as a reference on an application (no letter required), follow the above etiquette for asking permission. If the professor agrees, ask which telephone number (home, office, cell) to list on the application.

7. If you are applying to many places, give your recommender all of the documents for each application together in one packet.

8. Do not harass your recommenders. A week prior to the deadline, politely inquire about the letter’s status or respectfully remind your recommender of the due date.

9. Thank your recommenders for their time and effort on your behalf. Send personal, handwritten thank you cards. It’s nice to be acknowledged. 😊

10. Let your recommenders know if your application was accepted, if you won the scholarship, if you were hired, etc.

11. Cultivate your references. Stay in touch with your recommenders. They keep your letter on file and can update it if needed.