Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

I am typically both willing and excited to write recommendation letters for students. This document is intended to outline your own role in the process so that your letters are as strong as possible and make it to the right people at the right time.

General Rules

1. **Ask in advance.** Please ask for a letter of recommendation at least 3 weeks before its due date. Writing a good letter takes more than just a few minutes.

2. It is worth asking whether I think I can write you a **strong** letter. A negative answer isn’t anything personal, e.g., perhaps I don’t know you very well.

3. Gather, in an organized manner, the below information. This material is due at least two weeks before the due dates for letters.
   (a) A complete list of addresses where all of the letters will go, programs, deadlines, etc.
      i. For electronic recommendations, email me the names of the program/scholarship/etc. and the corresponding mailing addresses.
      ii. For paper recommendations (becoming less common), provide all necessary forms and pre-addressed envelopes.
   (b) Provide some information about yourself, e.g., (*denotes required information)
      i. *your major, minor, and year in school
      ii. *an up-to-date unofficial transcript
      iii. *a resume and/or list of accomplishments and outside activities
      iv. a draft of your personal statement and/or cover letter addressing issues such as:
         A. why you are particularly qualified for this position/honor/award
         B. how this position/honor/award will help you attain your career goals

4. Politely remind me of the due dates as they approach.

Organizing the Process

Consider organizing information (both for you and for me) into a spreadsheet, e.g.,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Where to Find</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>How to Submit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>12/15/10</td>
<td>in packet</td>
<td>mail (envelope enclosed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>12/15/10</td>
<td>in packet</td>
<td>email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>1/2/11</td>
<td>email</td>
<td>email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>1/15/11</td>
<td>upload to <a href="http://www.school.edu/grad/">http://www.school.edu/grad/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>