

Source:
USC Annenberg
School for
Communication

From

School Email. Many profs won't reply to non-school emails.

Subject

Be Clear. Profs get a lot of emails. Clearly stating your purpose tells them your email is time-sensitive and (usually) moves it higher on their priority list.

Greeting

Professional and Personable. Use a standard "Dear" and give a warm, sincere greeting in the first sentence.

Deadline

Date. At least 2 weeks is ideal. If less, then acknowledge the inconvenience (and be prepared for a "no").

Acknowledge

Time constraints are real. Profs are people, and people can be too busy to help (even when they want to).

Send

Edit & Send. Wait 3-5 business days for a reply. If they don't respond, then choose "Reply All" (it should be just you and the prof). Keep the original email as is with the time/date stamp, and politely ask the prof if they had a chance to see your email yet. If no response in 24 hours, then ask someone else.

If No

Thank them for their time and consideration and then email another prof.

Ask

Get to the Point. Let them know why you are writing.

Connect

Link the Prof to the application (and you). Let them know why you think they would be a good letter writer for you.

Offer

End on a hopeful promise to follow up. You are keeping the "ask" email concise, but also promising to give them enough material to make the letter writing go smoothly.

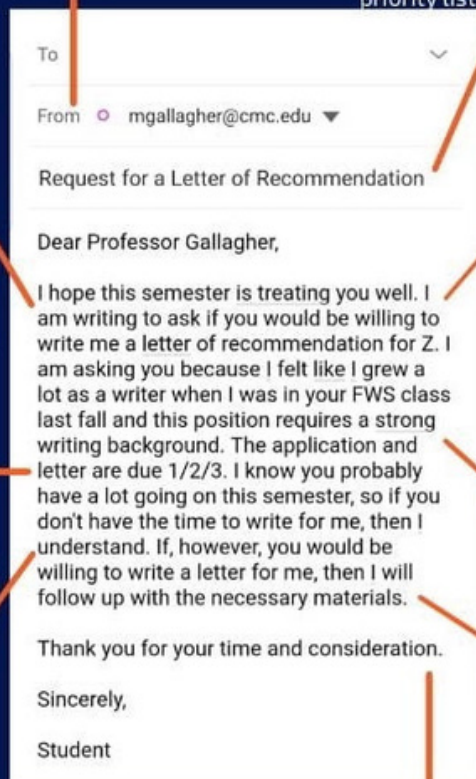
Gratitude

Remember: you need the favor. A simple thank you and a courteous "Sincerely" is a good way to end.

If Yes

Follow up. Helpful items include:

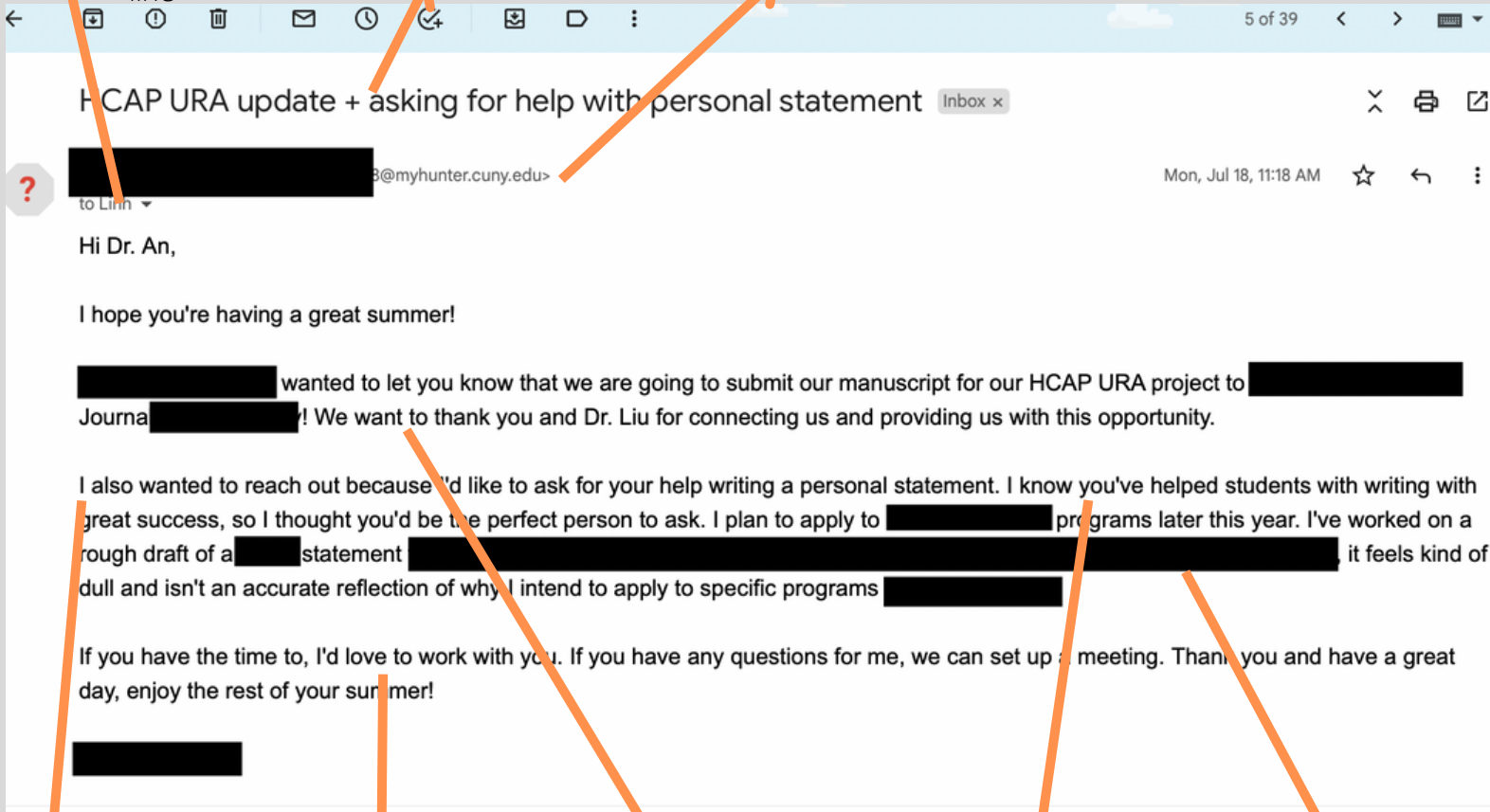
- Deadline for the letter.
- Information on how/where to submit the letter (give them the email addresses or hyperlinks--do not make them look for it!).
- Your current resume/C.V.
- The original call for an application that you are responding to.
- Copies of your letter of application or any essays or short answers you needed to fill out.



Greeting
Unless the faculty tells you otherwise, refer to them as "Professor." Sincere greeting in the first line

Subject
A clear subject heading

From
Send from a professional sounding email; preferably your student email



Ask
The student's ask comes right away; on the third line of the email.

Acknowledge
This sentence shows the student understands professors have time constraints.

Connect
Student reminds professor in what context they know them, and thanks them.

Seeing that they were actually helpful in the past may motivate the professor to help again.

Connect
The student explains why they are asking for that specific professor for help (i.e. expertise in an area)

The following sentence also explains what specifically they would like feedback on.

Deadline
This is not an urgent request. The fact that the student reached out so far in advanced puts less pressure on the professor.