Many students wait until they are seniors before they begin to think about letters of recommendation and, when they discover that they do not possess the necessary KSCs, they bemoan the fact that “nobody ever told me these things would be important!” Do not let this happen to you. You will be making great progress toward receiving strong letters of recommendation if you familiarize yourself with the list of KSCs on the previous pages and begin to do things that will allow you to fill the lines below the KSCs with strong evidence that you have achieved them.

**Strategies for Receiving Weak Letters of Recommendation (or, What Not to Do!)**

Following this set of rules (modified from a list compiled by Nish and cited in Bloomquist, 1981) will guarantee that you DO NOT receive strong letters of recommendation from your advisor and teachers. Do not allow the sarcastic tone of these rules to interfere with your understanding of the importance of their basic message. You cannot expect your teachers and advisor to write you good letters of recommendation if you do not treat them with courtesy and respect.

- Treat your teachers and classes as though you are barely able to tolerate them. An attitude of superior aloofness will show everyone how important you are and how lucky they are to exist at the same time and on the same planet as you.
- Be consistently late to class and other appointments. This will show your teachers how much busier you are than they are.
- Be very casual about class attendance. When you see your teacher after you have missed his class, ask “Did you say anything important in class today?” Act as if he is responsible to give you a full recital of the information you missed.
- Never ask questions or contribute to class, even when urged to by your teachers. It is far safer to be silent than to risk being considered a teacher’s pet.
- Complain when teachers provide extra learning opportunities. They really do not want you to learn more, they just want to make college miserable for you.
- Do not read assignments before class. You can waste a lot of class time by asking questions about things that are explained in the textbook. Assume a look of pained confusion whenever the teacher refers to a point made in the text.
- Always ask teachers for references when you are given a library assignment. It is especially important that this be done before you look for the references yourself, or you will be putting yourself in the dangerous position of having to learn to use the library.
- Always try to be an exception to the rule. Avoid taking tests with the rest of the class. Assume that teachers will give you make up tests or accept late papers, regardless of your reasons for missing the original tests or deadlines.
- Disagree with teachers in a haughty and condescending manner. This will show your fellow students that you are actually smarter than your teachers.
- Call assignments you do not understand “boring, irrelevant, or busy work.” This a great way to insult your teachers and will also allow you to judge academic material before you have the opportunity to actually understand it.
- Be a classroom lawyer. Always try to get what you want by twisting rules to your own advantage. “You never told us we had to capitalize the first words of the sentences in our papers!” “You said that we could miss a test if we had an emergency. Don’t you think the death of my gerbil was an emergency?”
- Never do any more than is minimally required in a class. Only geeks and brown-nosers do more than they absolutely have to in order to pass a class.
- Never help to plan or participate in departmental or campus activities. Make it very clear that, for you, college consists of simply accumulating enough credit hours to graduate as quickly as possible with the minimum effort.
- Avoid using a teacher’s office hours or making appointments. Show up when he is frantically finishing a lecture and explain that you must see him immediately.
1. Does the idea of living at a near-poverty level for 2 to 7 years and studying most of the time repulse you?

2. Do you enjoy writing term papers?

3. Does the idea of making verbal presentations of academic material in front of a group bother you?

4. Do you enjoy reading psychology books even if they are not assigned?

5. Do you put off studying for tests or writing papers as long as possible?

6. Do you often give up desirable social opportunities in order to study?

7. Do you want to earn a high salary when you finish graduate school?

8. Do you like to study?

9. Do you have trouble concentrating on your studies for hours at a time?

10. Do you occasionally read recent issues of psychology journals?

11. Do you dislike library research?

12. Do you have a drive to enter the profession of psychology?

13. Are there many other careers—besides being a psychologist—that you would like to pursue?

14. Do you intend to work full-time at a career?

15. Are you sick of school right now?

16. Are your grades mostly As and Bs?

17. Do you want to stop being a student and start being a real, wage-earning human?

18. Did you do well (i.e., receive an A or B) in statistics?

19. Do you feel a Ph.D. is desirable primarily because of the social status it gives to those who hold it?

20. Do you like doing research?

21. Do you dislike competing with other students?

22. Can you carry out projects and study without direction from anyone else?

Give yourself a point for every even-numbered question you answered with a "yes" and for every odd-numbered question you answered with a "no." The higher your score, the higher your potential for success in graduate school. If you passed this test with flying colors, it is time to begin to evaluate yourself as a potential graduate school candidate. The following survey deals specifically with clinical psychology, but it can serve as a general guideline for other disciplines as well.