

OSCAR Quick Reference Guide for Recommenders



<https://oscar.uscourts.gov>

OSCAR AT A GLANCE

- OSCAR provides an online method to handle letters of recommendation for judicial clerkships and appellate staff attorney positions.
- Submit a confidential letter of recommendation online to judges and staff attorney offices for each electronic request an applicant makes.
- Receive automatic email notifications of new and pending requests for letters of recommendation from applicants.
- Use OSCAR's tools to create recommendation letter templates ahead of time to use when filling recommendation requests.
- Use the online editor to create recommendation letters that OSCAR automatically personalizes to each recipient.
- OSCAR also allows you to upload letters of recommendation saved as PDF files for users wishing to use letterhead or electronic signatures.
- View and track submitted letters of recommendation.

THE OSCAR WINDOW

1 HOME • **FILL RECOMMENDATION REQUESTS** • VIEW COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS • MY ACCOUNT • RESOURCES • HELP • LOGOUT

2 **Fill Recommendation Requests**

3 **Clerkship Recommendations** | Staff Attorney Recommendations | My Templates

4 **Tip Sheets** | **Video Tutorials**

- ▶ Enter a Recommendation Letter Using the Online Editor
- ▶ Upload a Letter of Recommendation from a PDF File
- ▶ Create a Recommendation Letter Template for Later Use
- ▶ PDF Conversion Guidelines
- ▶ Creating a Letter Template
- ▶ Creating a Letter Using the Online Editor
- ▶ Uploading a PDF Letter
- ▶ How to Edit or Delete a Completed Letter

5 Applicant

6 **Apply Search**

7 **Last Name** | **First Name** | **JD.LLD From** | **Requested Recommendations**

Aarivak	Ivan	Hofstra University School of Law	2 pending, 0 complete
Account	Test	Hofstra University School of Law	3 pending, 0 complete
Ant	Adam	The University of Texas School of Law	1 pending, 0 complete

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- 1 **Main Navigation Menu** — Click navigation tabs to move around in OSCAR.
- 2 **Tabs** — Use tabs to navigate through each section of OSCAR.
- 3 **Instruction Box** — Blue boxes provide basic instructions and information as well as links to relevant help and resources.
- 4 **Help Resources** — Look for these links to video tutorials and tip sheets with step-by-step instructions on performing OSCAR tasks.
- 5 **Search Box** — Use these boxes to search your list of recommendation requests.
- 6 **Function Buttons** — Click to perform designated functions.
- 7 **Column Headers** — Click the arrow to sort the list by the chosen column. Click again to reverse the order.
- 8 **List of Items** — Displays sortable lists of items such as applicants requesting recommendation letters.

HOW RECOMMENDATIONS WORK IN OSCAR

Electronic letters of recommendation in OSCAR mimic paper letters of recommendation where an applicant requests a recommendation letter, and the recommender writes the letter and sends it directly to the judge on behalf of the applicant. In OSCAR, an applicant generates an electronic request for a recommendation letter. The recommender creates/uploads an electronic letter, and OSCAR sends it to the judge as part of an application. The applicant sees that a recommender submitted the requested recommendation letter but is never able to view its contents.

Electronic recommendation letters are not transferable documents and do not become the “property” of the applicant. Applicants generate an individual request for recommendation letters for each application they create. If an applicant creates 25 clerkship applications with you listed as a recommender, OSCAR will send you 25 requests for recommendation letters. An applicant cannot attach your letter to additional applications. However, you can configure OSCAR to automatically append your recommendation letter to any additional requests from an applicant. Using this option you can designate the letter to append to future applications indefinitely or for a specified time frame. If you do not select this option, OSCAR will continue to send you requests for letters of recommendation for any additional applications an applicant creates.



MANAGE YOUR ACCOUNT

Get a Username and Password

Recommenders **DO NOT** register for their own accounts in OSCAR.

Applicants or law schools create recommender accounts in OSCAR. Applicants generate electronic requests for recommendation letters by creating an application in OSCAR and including the recommender's name.

OSCAR sends the recommender an automated email message containing a username and password the first time any applicant includes the recommender on an application. **This only occurs once.** Subsequent requests for letters from any applicant do not cause OSCAR to send an invite with login information; however, recommenders can configure their OSCAR accounts to send them email notifications of new requests for recommendation letters and weekly reminders of pending requests.

If you did not receive the initial email with your username and password or you have misplaced your login information, contact your law school career office or the OSCAR help desk for a password reset.

Update Account Information

1. Click **My Account** in the main navigation. OSCAR displays the *My Account* screen with the *Main* and *Security Questions* tabs.
2. Select the *Main* tab.
3. Under *Change Profile*, update your first name, last name, or phone number if needed.
4. Click **Update Profile**.

Change Your Password

1. Under **My Account** on the *Main* tab, scroll down to **Change Password**.
2. Enter and confirm your new password. Please note the password requirements.
3. Click **Save Password**.

Change Recommendation Settings

OSCAR allows non-faculty recommenders to decide if they want to grant law schools permission to upload their letters on their behalf for their applicants.

1. Under **My Account** on the *Main* tab, scroll down to **Recommendation Settings**.
2. Select **No** or **Yes** for *Allow Law Schools to Fill Recommendation Requests*.
3. Click **Save Recommendation Settings**.

Change Email Notification Settings

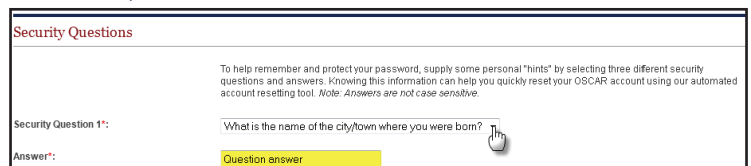
OSCAR allows recommenders to configure their accounts to send email notification of new requests for recommendation letters and to send weekly reminders of pending requests.

1. Under **My Account** on the *Main* tab, scroll down to **Email Settings**.
2. Select **Daily**, **Weekly**, or **Never** for *Email Frequency of New Recommendation Requests, Completed Recommendation Requests, and Auto Attached Request Expiration*.
3. Under *Receive Weekly Reminder of Pending Requests*, select **No** or **Yes**.
4. Click **Update Email Notifications**.

Note: If you allow a recommendation letter to automatically append to new requests from an applicant, you will not receive email notifications of additional recommendation requests from that applicant.

Change Account Security Questions

OSCAR requires you to set security questions in case you need to retrieve your username or password.



1. Under **My Account**, select the *Security Questions* tab.
2. Scroll down to *Security Questions 1-3* and select your questions from the drop-down menu.
3. Enter answers for the question you chose (3 questions required).
4. Click **Save**.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION TEMPLATES

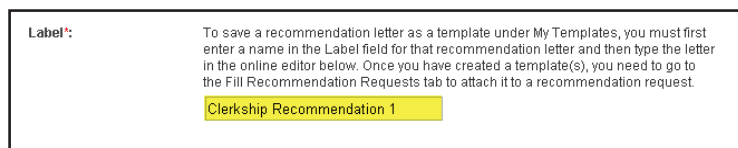
Recommenders can create letter “templates” to use for filling recommendation requests. Recommenders create letter templates with OSCAR’s online editor, which includes “merge fields” in the salutation block. Merge fields tell OSCAR to automatically include the letter’s date and the name and address of the judge the letter is directed to. Merge fields appear as text surrounded by square brackets, e.g., [honorable_judgename]. Another way to create a template is to use the *Fill Recommendation Request* function and save the letter you enter as a template for future use in OSCAR.

Create and Save a Letter of Recommendation Template

1. Mouse over *Fill Recommendation Requests* in the main navigation and click **My Templates** in the menu that appears. OSCAR displays the *My Templates* tab.
2. Click **Add New**. OSCAR displays a new screen to construct your recommendation letter template.
3. Choose **Judge** or **Staff Attorney Office** for your *Template Type*. OSCAR displays the online editor.



4. Enter a name for your template in the *Label* field. OSCAR displays your template by this name in *My Templates*.



5. Type or copy and paste your recommendation letter into OSCAR’s online editor. See *Hints for Using the Online Editor* on the next page.
6. Click **Upload** to save the template and return to the list of your templates. Click **Save** to save your work and continue editing. Save often when entering text to ensure your work is not accidentally lost. To cancel without saving the letter, click **Cancel Changes**.




7. Your template will now be available for use when filling a recommendation request. To use your template, follow the instructions on the next page under *Submit a Letter of Recommendation Using the Online Editor*. When you reach the *Submit Recommendations* tab, select the letter from the *Use Template* drop-down menu and alter as needed.

SUBMIT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

OSCAR provides two methods of submitting letters of recommendation: using OSCAR's online editor or uploading a letter saved as a PDF file.

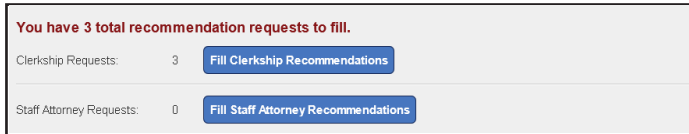
Hints for Using the Online Editor

- To insert a single line break, hold down the **Shift** key and press **Enter**.
- You cannot insert graphics when using this online editor. This includes institutional letterhead or signatures.
- To avoid formatting problems, use  (**Paste as Plain Text**) when copying and pasting from another document to the online editor.
- The online editor automatically includes a salutation block with merge fields. OSCAR replaces the merge fields with the data for each judge receiving the recommendation letter.

Enter a Letter of Recommendation Using the Online Editor

Use the merge fields available in OSCAR's online editor to create a generic letter that OSCAR will automatically customize with the name and address information of the judges receiving the letter.

- The gray box on the *Home* tab shows your total recommendation letter requests for clerkships and staff attorney positions. Click **Fill Clerkship Recommendations** or **Fill Staff Attorney Recommendations**. OSCAR displays the *Clerkship Recommendations* or *Staff Attorney Recommendations* tab.



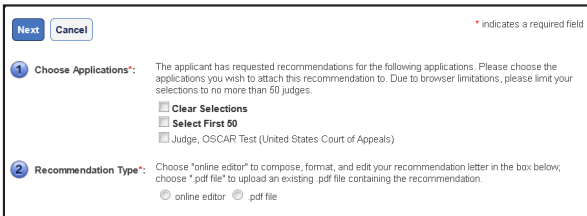
You have 3 total recommendation requests to fill.

Clerkship Requests:	3	Fill Clerkship Recommendations
Staff Attorney Requests:	0	Fill Staff Attorney Recommendations

- Scroll down to view applicants requesting recommendation letters. Click an **applicant's last name**. OSCAR displays the recommendation letter screen.
- Under step 1—Choose Applications—select the judges to receive the letter.

Note: You cannot select more than 50 judges at one time.

- Under step 2—Recommendation Type—select **Online Editor**. OSCAR displays steps 3-5.



Next **Cancel** * indicates a required field

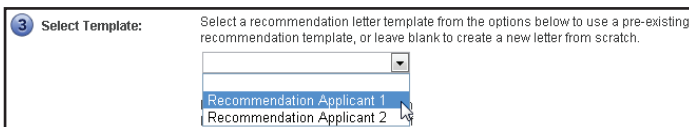
1 Choose Applications*: The applicant has requested recommendations for the following applications. Please choose the applications you wish to attach this recommendation to. Due to browser limitations, please limit your selections to no more than 50 judges.

- Clear Selections
- Select First 50
- Judge, OSCAR Test (United States Court of Appeals)

2 Recommendation Type*: Choose "online editor" to compose, format, and edit your recommendation letter in the box below; choose "pdf file" to upload an existing .pdf file containing the recommendation.

online editor pdf file

- (Optional) In step 3—Select Template—select a letter "template" you previously created. See *Letter of Recommendation Templates* for more information.




3 Select Template: Select a recommendation letter template from the options below to use a pre-existing recommendation template, or leave blank to create a new letter from scratch.

[Recommendation Applicant 1](#)

[Recommendation Applicant 2](#)

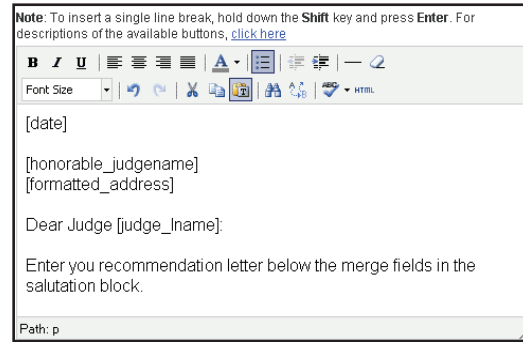
- (Recommended) Enter a label to save the letter as a new "template" for re-use.



4 Save Current Template: If you enter a label for this recommendation here, it will be saved to your "My Templates" tab and you may choose to use it for future recommendations. If you do not want to save this recommendation, leave this field blank. You may also save your template without submitting your recommendation by using the "Save Template" button to the right of the Label input field. If you change the label of a saved template, the template will be saved as a new template. **Note: When entering a recommendation, it is recommended that you save often. You must enter a label to save a template.**

New Applicant Template [Save Template](#)

- Under step 5—Edit Recommendation—enter your letter in OSCAR's online editor. Refer to *Hints for Using the Online Editor*.



Note: To insert a single line break, hold down the **Shift** key and press **Enter**. For descriptions of the available buttons, [click here](#).

B **I** **U** **Text** **Align** **Color** **Font** **Size** **Font Size** **Font Color** **Background Color** **HTML**


[date]

[honorable_judge name]
[formatted_address]

Dear Judge [judge_name]:

Enter your recommendation letter below the merge fields in the salutation block.

Path: p

- Click **Next**. OSCAR displays step 6—Confirm Recommendation.
- Review your *Typed-In Letter*. Under *Attach to Applications*, you can preview the letter as a judge will see it by clicking the  icon (PDF) next to a judge's name. To make changes, click **Edit Recommendation**.

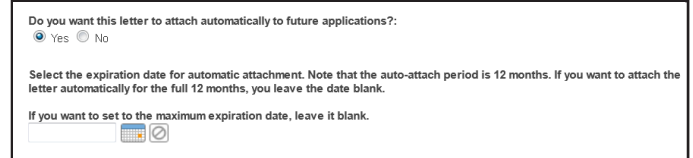


Attach to Applications:

 Mark Abel (United States Court of Appeals)

 Mark E. Aspey (United States District Court)

- Select **Yes** or **No** for *Automatic Attach to New Recommendation*. **Yes** allows OSCAR to append the recommendation letter to new applications when that applicant lists you as a recommender. Choose an **Expiration Date** for automatic attachment (*must be within 12 months*).





Do you want this letter to attach automatically to future applications?:

Yes No

Select the expiration date for automatic attachment. Note that the auto-attach period is 12 months. If you want to attach the letter automatically for the full 12 months, you leave the date blank.

If you want to set to the maximum expiration date, leave it blank.

- To submit your letter, click **Submit Recommendation**.

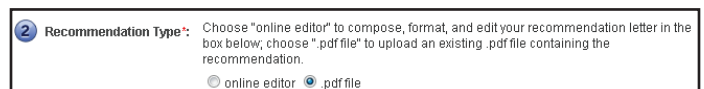
Upload a Letter of Recommendation as a PDF File

When you upload a PDF letter, OSCAR transmits the exact file you uploaded to every judge you select. If you wish to send an identical "to whom it may concern" letter to every recipient, this feature is perfect for that. If you want to personalize the letters, you should submit the letters using the online editor or create individualized PDF letters for each recipient and attach the individual documents to specific applications.

- The gray box on the *Home* tab shows your total recommendation letter requests for clerkships and staff attorney positions. Click **Fill Clerkship Recommendations** or **Fill Staff Attorney Recommendations**. OSCAR displays the *Clerkship Recommendations* or *Staff Attorney Recommendations* tab.
- Scroll down to view applicants requesting recommendation letters. Click an **applicant's last name**. OSCAR displays the recommendation letter screen.
- Under step 1—Choose Applications—select the judges to receive the letter.

Note: You cannot select more than 50 judges at one time.

- Under step 2—Recommendation Type—select **.pdf file**. OSCAR displays step 3.



2 Recommendation Type*: Choose "online editor" to compose, format, and edit your recommendation letter in the box below; choose ".pdf file" to upload an existing .pdf file containing the recommendation.

online editor .pdf file

- Use the file box under Step 3—Select PDF File to Upload—to select the file to upload. The file path shows in the *Browse* field.

- Click **Next**. OSCAR displays step 4—Confirm Recommendation.
- OSCAR displays the names of the judges to receive the letter. To preview your recommendation letter as a judge will see it, click the icon (PDF) or document name in the *Uploaded File* field.

- To make changes, click **Edit Recommendation** to return to the previous screen and choose a modified file.

Note: Letters uploaded from an existing PDF file cannot be edited in OSCAR.

- Select **Yes** or **No** for *Automatic Attach to New Recommendations*. **Yes** allows OSCAR to append the recommendation letter to new applications when that applicant lists you as a recommender. Choose an *Expire Date* for automatic attachment or set the letter to *Never Expire*.

- To submit your letter, click **Submit Recommendation**.

COMPLETED LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

OSCAR provides a separate tab to view letters of recommendation you have already submitted. You can edit or delete letters of recommendation to draft and finalized application to available positions.

View Completed Letters of Recommendation

- Mouse over *View Completed Recommendations* in the main navigation.
- Click **Clerkship Recommendations** or **Staff Attorney Recommendations** in the menu that appears. OSCAR displays the *View Completed Recommendations* screen.
- Scroll down to view submitted letters of recommendation. To preview a letter, click the icon (PDF) in the *Preview* column.

Batch Options		Items 1-2 of 2 Showing 20					
Delete Recommendations							
	Edit/Delete	Last Name	First Name	JDLBB From	Judge	Last Updated	Preview
		Aardbark	Ivan	Hofstra University School of Law	Abel, Mark	Sep 11, 2012 4:29 pm	
		Aardbark	Ivan	Hofstra University School of Law	Aspey, Mark	Sep 11, 2012 4:29 pm	

Edit or Delete a Letter of Recommendation

Letters created using the OSCAR online editor can be altered within the OSCAR system. Letters uploaded as PDF files must be deleted before uploading a replacement letter.

Online Editor

- Mouse over *View Completed Recommendations* in the main navigation.
- Click **Clerkship Recommendations** or **Staff Attorney Recommendations** in the menu that appears. OSCAR displays the *View Completed Recommendations* screen.

- Scroll down to view submitted letters of recommendation.

Note: You cannot edit recommendation letters with a lock icon () in the *Edit/Delete* column.

- Click on the button (Edit) for the letter you wish to edit. OSCAR displays a new screen to update the letter.
- Make your changes and click **Next**. OSCAR displays step 6—Confirm Recommendation.
- Review your typed-in letter, or preview the letter as a judge will see it by clicking the icon (PDF) next to a judge's name under *Attach to Applications*.
- To make changes, click **Edit Recommendation**. To submit your letter, click **Submit Recommendation**.

PDF File

- Navigate to your list of completed recommendations as described above.
- Locate the letter that you wish to delete.

Note: Click the icon (PDF) in the *Preview* column to review the letter before deleting.

- Click the icon (Delete).
- OSCAR displays a pop-up warning. Click **OK** to continue.
- The recommendation requests will return to active status and show as “pending” under the *Fill Recommendation Requests* tab. Follow the steps outlined above to upload a new recommendation letter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resources Tab

The OSCAR **Resources** tab contains help and training resources to aid you in using OSCAR more effectively. Under the **Resources** tab, you will find:

- Recommender Resources**—General judiciary and clerkship information, OSCAR glossary, and shortcuts to other resources
- Tip Sheets**—Illustrated instructions available in OSCAR online help
- Video Tutorials**—Online instructional videos for using OSCAR
- Downloadable Resources**—Other help documentation
- FAQs**—Frequently Asked Questions

Online Help

Click **Help** in the main navigation menu to view searchable, indexed online help from any OSCAR screen.

OSCAR Program Support

The OSCAR Program Office provides live support Monday - Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Eastern Time. Contact us via email at oscar-support@ao.uscourts.gov or by phone (toll free) at 1-866-666-2120.