

[Working with Your Editor: Requesting Letters of Support](#)

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A post from [Feeding the Elephant: A Forum for Scholarly Communications](#)

Acquiring editors play many roles in the publication process, and because the publishing process is entwined with the tenure and promotion process, editors are often asked to provide supporting documentation to their authors to share with tenure and promotion committees. This can be as simple as a paragraph confirming a book is under contract or in production, or as detailed as explaining a press's acceptance rate and review process.

Do you need to ask your acquiring editor for a status letter about your project for your tenure or promotion file? Here are some thoughts about asking for one, especially in a time where we are all trying to do more with less. These are all good things to keep in mind if you are asking your editor for a letter of interest for job applications, a letter of support for a grant or fellowship application, or any other sort of letter of support.

DO

P Ask for a publication status letter a couple of weeks in advance. Asking too soon may mean the letter isn't as up to date as possible. Asking too late may mean a letter isn't possible or isn't as detailed.

P Specify who the letter should be addressed to, if it should be directed to someone other than you as the author. And, because formal letters still have a mailing address, include your institutional physical address with the request.

P Mention if there is anything the letter should specifically address. Putting this information in the initial email ask can preempt some back and forth and save everyone time.

P Ask for the letter in a way that you might expect a student to ask for a letter of recommendation or how you would ask a colleague to serve as a reference—it is a professional courtesy to ask for the letter and not presumptuously tell an editor you need it.

DON'T

O Ask your editor to misrepresent the status of the project. If your committee wants to hear that your book is in press, but it isn't, it won't do you or your editor any good to say otherwise and it puts your editor in an awkward position to have to tell you no.

O Have your committee member reach out directly to your editor without confirming with your editor that you are okay with them communicating. Academia can be shady, so I won't talk to anyone,

including a department chair, unless an author has explicitly given the green light.

○ Ask, or have someone from the committee ask, who a reviewer is so you can avoid them for your tenure or promotion external reader. Anonymity is a big deal, and revealing the identity would be in conflict with the [Association of University Presses Peer Review Best Practices](#).

Please remember that an author and editor are a team, working together to get your book the best it can be. As your teammate, I'm happy to write a status letter and support your professional goals beyond the book in any way I can. I also want to underscore two things: One, if you have questions, just ask! It is you editor's job to answer. And two, there isn't one right way for the publishing process to go. This means your editor may want more details than I do, or it means your friend's editor might handle something like this differently than yours. And that is okay.

Last but not least: remember that it is important to be generous with yourself, especially right now. Keep up the good work on your book manuscript!

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