The Necessary History Between Us Before You Ask Me to Write a Recommendation for You

1) You are applying to an experimental psychology program.
2) You should know me better than simply having been in my class.
3) Having been in a class and earning a good grade are still necessary.
4) Having worked with me on a research project (or other endeavor relevant to the graduate program to which you are applying) – and having done a good job on that project.
5) For you to have had a writing project I evaluated.
6) For you to have had a presentation I evaluated.
7) For me to have experienced in our interactions a way to assess your creativity / imagination (e.g. contributions to the development of an experiment).

Things I Want When You Come Ask In Person for a Letter

1) Copy of Transcripts
2) GRE scores (or what you are averaging on practice tests if you haven't taken them yet + description of how you are preparing)
3) Your current curriculum vita
4) A list of schools to which you are applying and the deadlines for materials as well as a brief explanation of why it is a good program for you
5) A copy of your statement of purpose and other materials you will be submitting
6) For you to have carefully considered if I am the best person to be writing you a letter of recommendation
7) For you to have looked over the questions on the recommendation form and considered if I am able to answer them and if I am, that my answers would be positive
8) Addressed envelopes (and postage when I am to mail letters directly).

It is true that this list of requirements on my part will exclude many students but it is also true that it will prevent me from being put in a position where I am being asked to recommend someone I don’t really know or for whom I could not give a positive recommendation.