

Letters of Recommendation Guidelines

Follow the College's Guidelines

- Submit by the deadline! This means giving your recommenders the information they need and adequate time to prepare (see other side).
- Follow each college's instructions for how to submit recommendations (online vs paper, required recommendations vs supplemental recommendations). Use specific forms, if provided.

Follow the Established Policy for Your School

- Check with your guidance counselor to see if there is an established policy, for both counselor/school reports and for teacher recommendations.
- If specific forms are requested for use by your high school, be sure to use them in addition to any supplemental info you may provide.

Choose Your Recommenders Carefully

- Pay attention to any guidance regarding number and type (counselor, 11th or 12th grade teacher, specific subject area teacher, supplemental) of recommendations requested.
- Choose 1-3 academic teachers who know you well and want to write a letter for you. If accepted by the college, choose 1-2 supplemental recommenders (coach, employer, minister, etc.)
- A general rule is to choose teachers from academic subjects, preferably from junior or senior year or a college course.

Respect the Recommender

- Ask the recommender if he/she is willing to write a letter well in advance (previous spring or as soon as possible in the fall).
- Provide the recommender with all the necessary information regarding deadlines, addresses, forms, your background info (see other side).
- After the letters have been submitted, send a hand-written thank you note (small gift is optional) to each recommender.
- Advise each recommender of where you were accepted and where you are planning to attend.

Letters of Recommendation Information for the Recommenders

Convey this information in a letter to the recommender, whether or not a school form is used.

Information About You to Provide to the Recommender

- Your full legal name, email address, telephone number, and date of birth (colleges often use this as an identifier).
- Classes or extracurricular activities you've had with this recommender. Include class papers or projects if applicable.
- The **focus of the teacher recommendation is on you as a learner in the classroom**, but relevant background information can be helpful. The focus of a supplemental letter is within the context in which they know you (i.e., sports, work, church, etc.)
- Convey to the recommender that the college is interested in “**specific examples of what sets you apart from your peers**” (Eric Abrams, Asst. Director of Admissions, Stanford U). What is class like when you're not there?
- A brief summary of the major you're considering, your career interests, your reasons for wanting to go to a specific college, why you think a program or college is a good fit for you.
- Attaching a resume or supplemental information is optional.
- Parents! A “brag letter” on strengths/interests of your student can be helpful for counselors.

Information on the College Requirements to Provide to the Recommender

- Annotated list of colleges to which you are applying, listed in order of deadline and grouped by Common Application or other shared applications. For each college, provide the following information:
- Name and address of college admissions office and your applicant ID, if available. Indicate specific programs, scholarships, or other special instructions if applicable. Include a copy of any specific form to be used.
- Deadline and method for submitting letter (Common App, online, paper, etc.).
- For mailed letters (e.g., supplemental recommendations), provide addressed, stamped envelopes and a Word document with the addresses and your name, DOB, term applying for, applicant ID, etc. already entered.
- Thank the recommender in advance for their help.