



Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are used to strengthen a student's chance of admission to the college of their choice. Letters are written by high school counselors, academic teachers, coaches and other sources. These letters help the admission team assess the students' academic strengths and character as seen through the eyes of others. It is a supplemental document to the student's application, transcript and standardized test scores.

So how and when does a student request a letter of recommendation?

To answer this, we consulted a high school counselor to help break down some of the most common questions about letters of recommendations:

- **How many letters of recommendation will I need?**

Depending on the college the average is 1-3 letters. Each college will post how many are needed on either their website or on the application.

- **Who should I ask?**

It is important to ask an academic teacher that knows you well as a student. The teacher(s) you ask may not necessarily have taught the courses you got your highest grades in. You want the teacher to be able to speak to you as a student, your intellectual curiosity, your work ethic, participation in class, and your ability to work as a team member on a project.

- **Does it matter which academic teachers I choose?**

Generally, colleges want one recommendation from either English or History and one from the STEM area. However, look closely at what the college requires for your major. For example, if you are planning to major in engineering you may need a math and science recommendation.

- **What about my high school counselor?**

Your assigned counselor will write a letter about you in general. They will speak to your academics but also to your extracurricular activities and how they see you as a person. Frequently, the counselor will ask you and your parents to complete a student profile questionnaire to assist them in their letter writing.

- **When should I ask for the letters of recommendation?**

Ask the teacher at the end of your junior year. Always ask them in person and then follow-up with a thank you email. If your school is virtual this year it is acceptable to ask for your letter via email. Also, ask the teacher if they need any information from you. They may want to know what colleges you are planning to apply to and when you are going to submit your applications.

- **How are my letters of recommendation submitted to the college?**

Each school has their own system for electronic submission. It is important to ask your high school counselor what the procedure is for your school.

- **How do I follow-up?**

After you decide which college you will attend write a thank you note to each of your recommender thanking them for their letter of recommendation and sharing with them your final decision for college.

