

College Application Process: Letters of Recommendation

What is a letter of recommendation?

Letters of recommendation are vital pieces of your college application. While standardized test scores and GPA are important for determining if a school is the right academic fit, a letter of recommendation is an opportunity to personalize your application. Teachers and/or a counselor, who know you well, can write a letter explaining your academic potential, classroom behaviors, personality, and extracurricular achievements.

How do you know what your school requires?

Each college website will outline the specific requirements for their school's application. Requirements may vary with each school. You can access this information by going to the individual school website, clicking on the admission page, and searching for undergraduate application requirements.

Who should I ask?

Schools will typically ask for: 1 teacher recommendation, 2 teacher recommendations, a combination of a teacher and a counselor, or no letter of recommendation. You should be very thoughtful about who you ask. You should always have at least one core class teacher, preferably from junior year, who can clearly recommend your academic potential in an academic setting. This may not be the class where you had the highest grade, but the class where you have demonstrated active learning, asked questions or sought extra help, and engaged with the teacher. A counselor recommendation can provide admission counselors a more in-depth look at your experiences in high school. Counselor recommendations may highlight overall academic achievements, personal and/or academic hardships, and extracurricular accomplishments.

How do I ask someone for a recommendation?

First, it is vital to understand that writing a letter of recommendation takes time and is typically a task teachers perform outside of school hours. While teachers are happy to support their students, it is important to be mindful of their time. Second, two teacher recommendations are sufficient. Most schools will not review more than two so please limit it to two teachers. Third, it is important when you ask a teacher or counselor to provide a letter on your behalf that you are polite, you explain why you are choosing them specifically, and you ask each recommender what **you** can provide for them in order for them to have the information necessary to complete one.

- *Request letters of recommendation (provide at least two weeks notice):*
 - *Request a letter of recommendation from a teacher via email/zoom/in-person:*
 - *Complete the request on Naviance by clicking “Colleges I’m applying to” and then click on “Letters of Recommendation” and choose your teacher from the drop-down menu.*
 - *Fill out the Teacher Recommendation form (available electronically) or necessary paperwork from the teacher and submit to the teacher.*
 - *If required by the college or university, request a letter of recommendation from your counselor via email/zoom/in-person (keep in mind that not all schools require a counselor letter of recommendation):*
 - *Complete the Counselor Questionnaire “About Me”, “Surveys”, “Surveys not yet Started”*
 - *Complete the request by using the electronic form found on the Class of 2021 Google Classroom page called “School Counselor Letter of Recommendation Request” **and** email it to your counselor*

What is my deadline?

Recommendations should always be asked for **at least** two weeks prior to your first application deadline.