



# RECOMMENDATION LETTER

# TOOLKIT

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RECOMMENDATION  
LETTER

# TOOLKIT

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REQUESTING  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTERS - FOR  
STUDENTS



## ▶ REQUESTING RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Colleges use recommendations to learn more about how you've already proven your skills, qualities, and talents. You, the applicant, are responsible for choosing appropriate people to provide recommendations on your behalf. The key points on selecting a recommender and requesting a letter of recommendation are outlined below.

### ▷ HOW TO ASK

Always be sure to make your requests for letters of recommendation in person! Asking for a letter of recommendation face to face shows sincerity and allows you to communicate your needs and expectations directly to the writer. Find a free period to ask your intended recommender if they would be willing to write the letter. Be sure to prepare what you want to say beforehand; a simple request, like the sample below, works best.

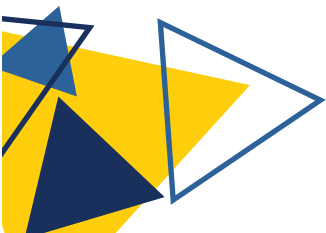
"I really enjoyed your class. I've learned a lot from you and feel like you've gotten to know me well. I'm applying to College X for next year and would be really flattered if you could write me a strong letter of recommendation for my application(s)."

### ▷ WHO TO ASK

The colleges that you are applying to will likely want a letter or letters of recommendation from both a teacher and a counselor. When considering which teacher to ask for a letter of recommendation, you will want to be sure to ask a teacher who has enough previous experience working with you that they will be able to adequately write about your academic performance/ability. If you have a teacher who you have worked with outside of the classroom (volunteer experience or extracurricular activity) this is a good person to consider asking for a letter of recommendation since they have a more well-rounded idea of you as a student. Additionally, your junior year teachers are often a great way to ensure your reference can easily recall and write about their relationship with you. Most important, is to go with your gut! If you have a strong relationship with a particular teacher in your school this is the right person to ask.

### ▷ WHEN TO ASK

Always be sure to request a letter of recommendation well before the deadline, at least a month in advance if not more. Keep in mind that some teachers may receive many requests to write recommendation letters and may have a limit on the number of requests that they can fulfill. In order to insure that you will be able to get a letter of recommendation completed on time and by your preferred recommender (upon their agreement) it is best to always ask as early as possible.





## ▶ WHAT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE

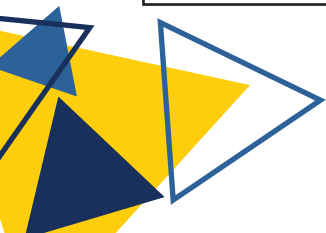
Your recommender will need to know the logistical information about how and when to submit your letter of recommendation upfront, i.e. what the deadlines for submission are, where they need to be submitted, how they should be submitted, and so forth. Additionally, it is always best to provide your recommender with some sort of “brag sheet” (example on back side of this sheet) that outlines your experiences as a student and reflects on who you are and what you value. The more detailed and thoughtful you are about your values, goals, and accomplishments, the more useful your brag sheet will be to the recommender.

## ▶ RELEVANT INFORMATION GUIDE CHART

Fill out the following table to provide your reference with any relevant information they may need when writing your recommendation letter.

“My accomplishments and aspirations in each of the following areas include...”

<b>ACADEMICS</b> <i>(Do you excel in a certain area, have you shown growth overtime, received any awards or honors, etc.)</i>	<b>EXTRACURRICULAR</b> <i>(What activities - social, volunteer, etc - have you participated in and why are they important to you?)</i>	<b>YOU MAY NOT KNOW...</b> <i>(What work, family, or other responsibilities may your writer not know about?)</i>	<b>COLLEGE &amp; CAREER</b> <i>(What do you hope to accomplish in college and after?)</i>





## ▶ FINAL TIPS



Thank your writer immediately after they agree to write the recommendation and let them know you appreciate their time and willingness



Make sure each reference knows the deadline for submission for your letter of recommendation



Provide reminders to the writer closer to the deadline, i.e. a week from the deadline send a quick reminder of the due date and follow-up with a thank you



If letters must be mailed, provide your references with addressed and stamped envelopes for each college that requested a recommendation



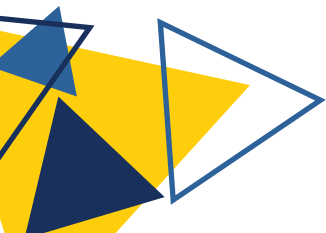
Give your recommender as much time as possible to complete their letter of recommendation - two weeks minimum but preferably a month or longer



Waive your right to view recommendation letters on your application forms, admission officers will



Provide recommenders with information about your strengths and other accomplishments that are important to highlight in their letter





RECOMMENDATION  
LETTER

# TOOLKIT

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WRITING  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTERS - FOR  
COUNSELORS



## ▶ COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

As a counselor, it is your job to help create a story that gives a face to a student that is in the process of applying to college. Admissions decisions are based on the context of your own high school, meaning that the performance of each student is judged relative to their peers not those that they are submitting their applications with across the nation. You want to let college admissions know what opportunities your student has taken advantage of while they have been in high school that demonstrate that they are a high achieving student and leader in your school.

When writing letters of recommendation for your students you should always be sure to highlight the following accomplishments:

- Rigor of coursework; has your student taken honors and other advanced placement courses, how have they performed?
- Leadership position(s) in extracurricular activities and other work positions
- Volunteer work in school and outside of school
- Mention life outside of school; what is your student balancing/managing while still maintaining their position as a high achieving student?

## ▶ RECOMMENDATION LETTER GUIDELINES

The following Do's and Don'ts should be used as guidelines in order to create a well-rounded counselor recommendation that conveys the story you are trying to tell about your student:

### ✓ DO'S

- ▶ Let college admissions know if a student has taken the most rigorous coursework available to them
  - ▶ Help college admissions understand your situation in relation to the student and how this may effect how well you know the student - i.e. if you have a large counseling load; if you're new to the school; if the student is new to the school
  - ▶ Address attitude/character as well as academic ability
  - ▶ Address growth if you have known the student over a significant period of time
- Realize that the counselor recommendation is sometimes used as a road map to interpret the transcript - if there are blunders on the transcript, address those in the letter

### ⊗ DON'TS

- ▶ Directly list all of the student's activities or courses; that information is available elsewhere in their application. Interpret the value, skills, and personal growth gained from participating these activities and mention this in your letter instead.
- ▶ Believe that your students' performance isn't significant comparative to others nationwide; admissions decisions are made based on the context of your high school and student community
- ▶ Include sensitive information without first consulting the appropriate parties, whether that be the student and/or their family. Most schools will prefer to know information that explains any unforeseen circumstances present on a students' transcript.





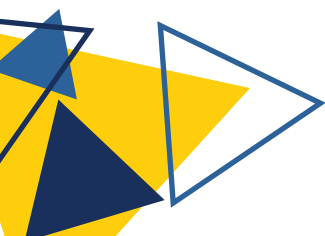
## ▶ RELEVANT INFORMATION GUIDE CHART

Fill out the following table in order to get started on your recommendation letter.

“The student demonstrated growth in each of the following areas by...”

<b>ACADEMICALLY</b> <i>(Has the student taken progressively harder classes over time, etc.)</i>	<b>EXTRACURRICULAR</b> <i>(Has the student taken on responsibilities outside of school and stuck to them, etc.)</i>	<b>PERSONALLY</b> <i>(Has the student developed as a leader, realized things they are passionate about, etc.)</i>	<b>SOCIALLY</b> <i>(Has the student demonstrated their personality growth, maturation, etc.)</i>

If you're having trouble writing your letter of recommendation you can ask your student to fill out this table!







## ▶ WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SUBMITTING YOUR INITIAL RECOMMENDATION?

Students are likely to be notified that they are either accepted, waitlisted, deferred, or rejected from each college to which they applied. If you are working with a deferred-to-waitlisted student, take the following steps to enhance the student's chances of acceptance:

- Work with your student to determine how many students are typically waitlisted and/or deferred and then accepted at their school of interest. Use your findings to help guide your student in their acceptance decisions.
- Call the school's admissions office to advocate on the student's behalf; reinforce what was stated in your letter of recommendation and let them know why the student would be a worthy addition to the university.
- Have your student e-mail their admission representative with a strong letter of interest, stating that the college remains their first choice and that they are ready to commit upon acceptance. The student should list any new developments since they sent in their application (accomplishments, internships, etc.) in this email.

Remember, if you are notified that your student has received a waitlist or deferral notice from their school of choice this does not mean that this student will not have a chance at getting into the school. Instead, necessary actions should be taken to make sure the university is aware that the student is still interested in attending the university, would be an asset to campus life, and fully intends to commit to the school upon acceptance.

