

Letters of Recommendation

Most private colleges require one or two recommendations from teachers. *Common Application* colleges require at least one academic teacher letter. In most cases large, public colleges and universities do not accept letters of recommendation. Please check your college admissions website to determine if and how many letters are required.

Guidelines and Protocols

- Request teacher recommendations in person. Teachers do not want to write recommendations for students who simply leave notes on their desks or email them. It is also best to ask privately.
- Ask the teacher if there is anything s/he needs from you to write a strong recommendation. Some require a resume or have a form that they ask you to complete.
- Let teachers know where you are applying and the deadlines for submission.
- Letters are completed in one of three ways described below; 1) through a Common Application electronic request, 2) through an admissions link emailed to the teacher, 3) by sending through U.S. mail.

Which teacher(s) should you ask?

- Ask a teacher who knows you well if s/he would be willing to write a letter of recommendation.
- Colleges prefer that you have letters from teachers whom you have had for junior or senior core-level subjects. Occasionally a sophomore teacher will write a letter.
- The teacher who gave you the highest grade may not be the one who is likely to write you the best recommendation; it is more important that the teacher knows you well.
- Ask teachers who will write the strongest letters, even if they teach similar subject areas. Note that some colleges require one from a humanities course, and another from a math/science course.
- Consider talking to teachers in which you have overcome obstacles to demonstrate significant improvement and perseverance, even if it was not your strongest subject.

Who sends the letters of recommendation?

All recommendation letters are sent directly from the teachers or counselors not from students. (usually electronically *via* the Common Application or an admissions link). Colleges and scholarship organizations want to ensure that the teacher/counselor's writing is a candid appraisal of your ability.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation through the Common Application

In order to request letters of recommendation electronically through the Common Application you must first complete your application and select *Recommenders*. You will then sign what is known as the [FERPA waiver](#). Most colleges recommend that you choose to waive your access to a letter of recommendation. It is widely held that letters of recommendation do not have the same credibility with the colleges unless students waive their right of access. See [FERPA guidelines](#) for more information.

Paper Teacher Recommendation Letters

For any colleges, programs or scholarships to which you are applying that do NOT accept electronic applications follow these directions for sending [Paper Teacher Recommendation Letters](#)

