# **How to Get a Great Letter of Recommendation**

* College recommendation letters should be written by someone who can describe your skills, accomplishments and personality. **Letters of recommendation work for you when they present you in the best possible light, showcasing your skills and abilities.**

### When to Ask for Recommendations

* Make sure to give your references at least one month before your earliest deadline to complete and send your letters.
* Many teachers like to write recommendations during the summer. If you apply under early decision or early action plans, you'll definitely need to ask for recommendations by the start of your senior year or before.
* Some teachers will be writing many letters, which takes time. Your teachers will do a better job on your letter if they don’t have to rush.

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### Whom to Ask

* **Read each of your college applications carefully. If the application does not give you specific instructions about whom to get a recommendation letter from, then follow the below guidelines.**  Schools often ask for letters of recommendation from an academic teacher, sometimes in a specific subject, or a school counselor or both.
* Ask a counselor, teachers and your family who they think would make good references.
* Choose one of your teachers from junior year or a current teacher who has known you for a while. Colleges want a current perspective on you, so a teacher from several years ago isn't the best choice.
* Consider asking a teacher who also knows you outside the classroom. For example, a teacher who directed you in a play or advised your debate club.
* Consider other adults — such as an employer, a coach or an adviser from an activity outside of school — who have a good understanding of you and your strengths.
* Perhaps most important, pick someone who will be enthusiastic about writing the letter for you. If you’re unsure about asking someone in particular, politely ask if he or she feels comfortable recommending you. That’s a good way to avoid weak letters.

### How to Get the Best Recommendations

* Some teachers write many recommendation letters each year. Even if they know you well, it’s a good idea to take some time to speak with them. Make it easy for them to give positive, detailed information about your achievements and your potential by refreshing their memory. Here’s how:
  + Talk to them about your class participation.
  + Remind them of specific work or projects you’re proud of.
  + Tell them what you learned in class.
  + Mention any challenges you overcame.
  + Give them information they need to provide specific examples of your work.
  + If you need a recommendation letter from a counselor or other school official, follow these guidelines:
    - Make an appointment ahead of time.
    - Talk about your accomplishments, hobbies and plans for college and the future.
    - If you need to discuss part of your transcript — low grades during your sophomore year, for example — do so. Explain why you had difficulty and discuss how you've changed and improved since then.

**You may want to provide the person writing your letter with a resume that briefly outlines your activities, in and outside the classroom, and your goals.**

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### Final Tips

* The following advice is easy to follow and can really pay off:
  + Waive your right to view recommendation letters on your application forms. Admission officers will trust them more if you haven’t seen them.
  + Give your references addressed and stamped envelopes for each college that requested a recommendation.
  + Make sure your references know the deadlines for each college.
  + Follow up with your references a week or so before recommendations are due to make sure your letters have been sent.
  + Once you’ve decided which college to attend, write thank-you notes. Tell your references where you’re going and let them know how much you appreciate their support.

### **Collegeboard.org.**

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/your-high-school-record/how-to-get-a-great-letter-of-recommendation>

Examples of Recommendation Letters

Dear Admissions Committee,

It is my pleasure to recommend Noah for admission to your undergraduate program. As his school counselor for the past four years, I have witnessed the exceptional contributions that Noah has made to our school community. Not only is he an excellent and hard-working student, but he has dedicated himself to enriching the lives of students and faculty around him. Noah is truly special for his compassion and commitment to helping others.

Noah has committed himself specifically to bringing mental health awareness to the school. After enduring the tragedy of losing a family member to suicide, Noah devoted himself to bringing greater education about mental health into the curriculum. He said that he wanted to break the stigma around these discussions. Noah found a branch of the Mental Health Foundation's Live Laugh Love Club at the school. Noah has helped bring in speakers to address the school as a whole, held events, and led campaigns about the devastating effects of bullying. While he started out high school on the reticent side, he has since grown to have a powerful voice in our school community, speaking up for what he believes in and proving himself to be an impassioned and inspiring leader.

Noah plans to study psychology in college and would like to work in the field of psychology, social work, or non-profits. His academic accomplishments are especially impressive in AP Psychology and the humanities. Noah's teachers describe him as an insightful, sensitive, perceptive, and diligent student. He has truly proven his resilience and strength through the challenging circumstances in his life. The hardship Noah has faced has motivated him to advocate for mental health awareness as a core aspect of our school's climate and curriculum. Noah's efforts around bullying prevention and social-emotional wellness will continue to nurture our students' well-being long after he's graduated.

Noah has my enthusiastic recommendation. He is a kind, compassionate, intelligent, and strong person who has a clear sense of direction and purpose. I am confident that he will bring the same warmth, support, insight, and hard work to his college classes and social community. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information.

Sincerely,

Ms. Easton

School Counselor

Dear Admissions Committee,

It is a great pleasure to recommend Stacy for admission to your engineering program. She is one of the most exceptional students I have encountered in my 15 years of teaching. I taught Stacy in my 11th grade honors physics class and advised her in Robotics Club. I am not surprised to find out she is now ranked at the top of an extraordinarily capable class of seniors. She has a keen interest in and talent for physics, math, and scientific inquiry. Her advanced skills and passion for the subject make her an ideal fit for your rigorous engineering program.

Stacy is a perceptive, sharp, quick individual with a high aptitude for math and science. She is driven to understand how things work, whether they be the old computer hard drives in the school library or the forces that hold our universe together. Her final project in class was especially impressive, an investigation of frequency-dependent sound absorption, an idea that she said was sparked by not wanting to bother her parents with her hours of guitar practice at home. She's been a strong leader in Robotics Club, eager to share her knowledge with others and learn new skills. I have the students in the club prepare lessons and take turns leading our after-school meetings. When it was Stacy's turn, she showed up prepared with a fascinating lecture on lunar nautics and fun activities that got everyone moving and talking. She was our only student teacher to be met with much deserved applause at the end of her lesson.

Stacy's personal strengths are as impressive as her intellectual accomplishments. She's an active, outgoing presence in class with a great sense of humor. Stacy's the perfect person to get a group project rolling, but she also knows how to sit back and let others take the lead. Her cheerful nature and openness to feedback means she's always learning and growing as a learner, an impressive strength that will continue to serve her well in college and beyond. Stacy is just the kind of driven, engaging, and curious student that helped make our classroom a lively environment and safe place to take intellectual risks.

Stacy has my highest recommendation for admission to your engineering program. She has demonstrated excellence in all that she puts her mind to, whether it's designing an experiment, collaborating with others, or teaching herself to play classical and electrical guitar. Stacy's endless curiosity, combined with her willingness to take risks, leads me to believe there will be no limit to her growth and achievements in college and beyond. Please don't hesitate to contact me at milevamaricfanclub@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Randall, Physics Teacher

Marie Curie High School