

Letter of Recommendation Do's & Don'ts

If you are applying to a 4-year college or university, chances are you will need a letter of recommendation. Here are some do's and don'ts for the recommendation process.

DO:

- Ask your teacher EARLY, preferably before the end of the school year your Junior year. You definitely want to ask before the end of September Senior year.
- Be polite with your request. Teachers are not required to write letters and they can deny your request.
- Keep track of who you have asked and whether they agreed. Save those emails!
- Invite your teacher on Common App as soon as you create your account (as long as they have already agreed to write your letter)
- Be prepared to give your teacher a copy of your [Student Response Form](#)
- Politely remind your teacher about your letter at the beginning of the school year and about two weeks before the letter is due.
- If you change your deadline (deciding to apply early action, for example) make sure your teacher knows.
- Thank your teacher!!! A thank you note would make their day.

DON'T:

- Wait until the last minute to ask for a recommendation. This stresses you out, and stresses your teacher out. Even if you're not sure where you're applying yet, ask for letters EARLY.
- Add your teacher to Common App before you've asked them for your letter. Have the conversation with your teacher first, make sure they agree, *then* add them to Common App as a recommender.

- Set your own deadlines. Colleges are very strict with application deadlines for you, but there is a grace period for materials that come from schools. DO NOT set your own deadline for your teacher, especially if you are asking late.
- Pester your teacher about the deadline. It is appropriate to follow up a few times, but weekly or daily emails asking about your letter will not be well received. If you have serious concerns about missing a deadline, reach out to your counselor to help you navigate the situation.
- Enlist your parents to also pester your teacher about the deadline. Again, reach out to your counselor for help if you are really worried, and remember: recommenders have a deadline grace period that applicants do not have.

How many letters do I need?

Two is usually plenty. You will also automatically have a letter from your counselor.

Who should I ask?

Some colleges specify that they want to hear from a core academic teacher (English, Math, Science or History). If you have a particularly good relationship with an elective teacher, ask them and a core academic teacher.

The teachers you ask should know you fairly well, and it's usually helpful if you did well in their class.

Can I ask people besides teachers?

Yes, as long as you have at least one letter from a core academic teacher as well. It's not uncommon for students to ask their coaches, youth ministers, or other important adults in their lives for a letter.