

Letters of Recommendation/Teacher-Counselor Evaluations – Tips for Students & Parents

If your prospective colleges require a letter of recommendation (including all common applications) or you're on the borderline for meeting admissions criteria, now is the time to begin requesting letters of recommendation. The person(s) you ask should know you well and can speak highly of you personally and/or academically. Below are some frequently asked questions and answers:

1) How many letters of recommendation should I have?

Generally speaking two or three letters should serve you just fine. Consider two from your academic teachers and one from a coach, employer, volunteer coordinator or anyone else who has positive things to say about you. A letter should never come from a relative.

2) How should I request the letter of recommendation?

A face-to-face personal request is best, especially from your teachers. If that's not possible due to location or other issues, a personal call or a nicely written email is acceptable. *Please remember to follow up with some form of a "thank you" to the people who provide recommendations for you!*

3) How soon can I expect the letters?

Please try and request letters at least 2-3 weeks in advance of your deadline. Remember that many teachers and coaches are asked to write 20-30+ letters each fall. These are normally done outside of the school day so everyone needs time to do a good job for you.

4) Do the letters come to me, my counselor or the school directly?

It depends. Most college applications are done online and often have a link that you send to your references allowing them to upload their letters directly to the school. With the Common Application, the letters of recommendation come in the form of "Teacher Evaluations" and the "Secondary School Report" and are built into the application process. Other schools still accept paper versions, and many schools don't require letters of recommendation at all. We counselors keep the letters on file in Student Services and can send out additional copies for you when needed. *Please note that most teachers prefer that the recommendations remain confidential to avoid the comparisons of letters between students.*