

Tips for Letters of Recommendation

Whether it is required for a college application or a scholarship opportunity, a letter of recommendation plays a crucial role in painting the complete picture of YOU. While grades, entrance exam results, and extracurricular activities all describe the type of student you are, the letter showcases your accomplishments, personal attributes, and skills.

WHEN TO ASK

- The earlier you ask, the better!
- One month before your earliest application deadline, especially when asking a teacher or counselor who might be writing many letters of recommendation.
- Early decision applications might require a recommendation at the start of your senior year.

WHOM TO ASK

- Often colleges request letters of recommendation from a teacher, your school counselor, or both. If you're considering a specific major, you might consider getting a recommendation from a teacher of a related subject.
- A counselor's recommendation broadly showcases the student's potential, while a teacher's recommendation provides a more specific focus on academic performance.
- If it can be any teacher, core subject teachers, such as your English, math, science, or social studies teachers, make good candidates.
- In some cases additional recommendations may come from a coach, work supervisor, or community member, but be sure to follow the specific guidelines provided by the college regarding letters of recommendation.
- It is recommended to ask a teacher from your junior year or a current teacher if they have known you long enough to form an opinion.
- It is best not to go back too far, as colleges want current perspectives on their potential candidates.
- A teacher who can speak to your potential outside the classroom as well is a great bonus!

HOW TO ASK

- Ask in a way that allows a teacher to decline comfortably if he or she does not have time to do a good job.
- For example: "Do you feel you know me well enough, and have enough time, to write a letter of recommendation for me?"
- On the application form, waive your right to view recommendation letters. This gives more credibility to the recommendations in the eyes of the college.

HOW TO HELP

- Advise teachers and counselors of appropriate deadlines, especially noting any early deadline dates.
- Take some time to speak with them, even if they know you well.
- Make it easy for them to give positive, detailed information about your achievements and your potential by providing them with a résumé or a “brag sheet” to reference.
- Follow up with your recommendation writers a week or so prior to your first deadline to see if they need more information before they mail their letters.
- Answer some of the questions below to provide your recommenders with the information they need to write the best letters for you.

Helpful Questions to Answer for Recommendation Writers:

- 1** What two adjectives best describe you? Give one example of why one of those words came to mind.
- 2** Are there any special circumstances, living situations, or relevant family aspects that have had a significant impact on your personal or academic life?
- 3** What do you consider some of your greatest strengths and how did you come to realize them?
- 4** What extracurricular activities have you been involved in? What achievements have you accomplished? Describe the ones that are most meaningful to you.
- 5** Why is a college education important to you? What are some of your long-term academic goals and what do you intend to study?
- 6** Have you had any experience in a leadership position? If so, what did you learn from the experience?
- 7** Have you served your community or had any volunteer experience? If so, which of these was the most memorable or meaningful and why?
- 8** Are there any challenges you have faced and overcome that you would want someone to know? Be sure to include what you learned from the experience.

Academic Resume Template

<p>First Name M. Last Name Address City, State Zip Phone: E-mail:</p>	
<p>Education Bremen High School 511 West Grant Street Bremen, IN 46506</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Anticipated Graduation Year</i> _____ Class Rank: ____/# of students GPA: ____/4.0 PSAT, SAT, or ACT Scores</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Junior Classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Colleges will be looking at the difficulty of your classes ▪ Academic courses ▪ More classes... 	<p style="text-align: center;">Senior Classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACP or college classes ▪ Academic courses ▪ Any classes you plan to take
<p>Extra-Curricular Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List any sports and how many years you participated ▪ You can also list any clubs and number of years ▪ This would be a good section to list items like class officer or president ▪ You may also want to include any special awards given, like MVP of a team, etc... 	
<p>Work Experience or Internship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List any jobs you have had, including summer work ▪ This is very informative to colleges showing how you have used your time ▪ If you have done an internship or have worked in the field you are going in to, place that information here 	
<p>Community Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List specific hours and type of community service here ▪ Be sure to start with action verbs on your community service or work experiences ▪ Example: <i>Volunteered</i> to read to the elderly at the local nursing home. 	
<p>Special Interests/Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maybe you have a hobby that relates to your career goals ▪ Maybe you have certain special computer skills, like computer programming or proficiency with typing...List those here ▪ This is also an excellent way to show how well-rounded of a person you are 	
<p>Honors and Awards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List any awards or scholarships that you have received ▪ Maybe you are an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts ▪ Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, or any other awards not listed above 	

Other tips for you: (delete this when completed)

- Bulleted points do NOT need to be complete sentences, but should have a past-tense action verb and be at least a phrase
- If you do not have anything to put on the resume, fill in as much as possible
- BE HONEST

