

## Letters of Recommendation (Teacher/Professor)

*Educators have many responsibilities—teaching, grading, planning lessons, attending meetings, etc. They enjoy writing letters of recommendation, but it does impact their schedules. The easier and more enjoyable you make the experience for your letter writer, the better letter you will receive.*

**Step 1: Ask yourself** “what kind of student was I when I interacted with this educator?” In any recommendation letter, educators have a moral obligation to be honest. Educators will write exception letters for students, but only if they had exceptional interactions with the student. Ask yourself these questions:

Did I put forth my best effort on a daily basis?

Did I participate in class with insightful comments/questions?

Did I contribute to the class in a positive manner?

Did I show genuine interest?

Did I get to know this educator enough so that s(he) could write an entire letter about me?

\*Note: Don't just consider your grade when thinking about your interaction with the educator. It goes beyond that.

**Step 2: Ask the educator** if s(he) can write you a strong letter. If you did Step 1 correctly, then the answer should be “yes!” However, if you are still confused, ask your educator for an honest answer. Honesty is better than receiving a bad letter and jeopardizing your application.

- ✓ Waive your right to view recommendation letters on your application forms. Admission officers will trust them more if you haven't seen them.

**Step 3: Help the educator help you!**

- ✓ **Write a one to two page “letter” that will help the educator write you the excellent recommendation** that you deserve. This letter should include the following:
  - **How was the class/relationship for you?** Give the educator a sense of what you got out of the class or relationship.
  - **What are your long term goals for education and life?**
  - What are **7 adjectives** that describe your work and participation in the class/your interactions with the educator?
  - Describe any moments that really made the class/the relationship **memorable** or that made you **stand out**—for example, a great question, a conversation, an assignment, etc.
  - Describe one or more projects, events, examples of something in the class/interaction that you are **proud of**.
  - Are there any **hardships** you have faced that show your ability to **overcome challenges** in the class/relationship?
  - What **grades** did you receive in the class? First semester grade, current grade. If necessary, **explain** why you think your grade is less than what you hoped for.
  - **Anything else** that you think might help your educator write you a strong letter. If there is something specific you would like the educator to mention in the letter, be sure to specifically address it.
- ✓ **Include a copy of your resume**
- ✓ **Include a copy of your transcript**
- ✓ **Include a list of colleges you are applying to with due dates**

**Step 4: Give the educator at least one month before the letter is due.** Two months is even better. If ample time is not given, it will seem more of a burden to the educator, and the educator might not be willing to write your letter.

**Step 5:** Provide all of your materials (letter to educator, resume, transcript, list of college applying to with due dates) in a large manila envelope with your name. **If you are using the Common Application or need your letters of recommendation submitted electronically, make sure you have the recommendation links emailed to your educator.** Make sure you have your educator's correct email address!

- ✓ If your letters must be mailed to the college, provide a self-addressed (use ASTI as the return address), stamped envelope to your letter writer.

**Step 6:** Check in a week or two before your letter is due to make sure the educator sent the letter.

**Step 7: Write a thank you card to the educator. This shows professionalism and gratitude!**

## Letter of Recommendation (Counselor School Report)

When applying to private colleges and universities, your counselor must submit a School Report, which includes the ASTI School Profile, your transcript, a character/behavior evaluation, and a letter of recommendation. The counselor's letter of recommendation can be a very important piece to your college application. In order for your counselor to write a compelling, positive letter of recommendation, you should follow these steps.

**Step 1: Ask your counselor to write you a letter of recommendation.** You must give the counselor at least one month to write your letter. During the fall semester of your 12<sup>th</sup> grade year, your counselor will be asked to write many letters of recommendation. Plan to ask your counselor for this letter of recommendation during the spring semester of your 11<sup>th</sup> grade year before the summer break starts.

- ✓ Waive your right to view recommendation letters on your application forms. Admission officers will trust them more if you haven't seen them.

**Step 2: Help your counselor help you!**

- ✓ **Write a letter to your counselor highlighting the following questions/topics.** Use as many details and examples as possible in your writing so that s(he) can draw upon these examples when writing your letter:
  - **What are 7-10 adjectives** you would use to describe yourself?
  - Describe an academic accomplishment (major paper, science experiment and/or artistic project) you are most proud of, and tell why you take pride in it.
  - What kind of learner are you? Which academic setting or assignments make you thrive? What interests you?
  - List your three most distinguishing or most admirable qualities. Explain each in several sentences.
  - What do you hope to accomplish in college and after? Consider your intended major (if you have one), career goals, and your broader goals.
  - What do you consider your most important activities outside of school? List jobs, paid or voluntary; religious activities; hobbies; travel; music; art; and/or drama. Include the number of years of your involvement and the amount of time you spent on the activity weekly, and explain why this activity was significant to you.
  - Are there any **hardships** you have faced that show your ability to overcome challenges? Provide examples, and discuss what you have learned as a result of these hardships/challenges.
  - Describe your **family background**—are you the first in your family to attend college? Do you hold any leadership responsibilities at home (caring for siblings, interpreting for parents, taking grandparents to doctor's appointments, etc.)?
  - Are your grades (9<sup>th</sup> grade-present) an accurate representation of who you are as a student? If not, explain. *Make sure you explain any D, F, or W grades.*
  - Do you think your SAT/ACT test scores are an accurate reflection of your abilities? Why or why not?
  - Are you receiving IGETC and/or an AA degree? If so, list the AA degrees you plan to complete.
  - Anything else you want the counselor to mention in your letter. *If there is something specific you would like the counselor to address in your letter, be sure to specifically address it.*
- ✓ **Include a copy of your resume**
- ✓ **Include a copy of your SAT/ACT scores**
- ✓ **Include a list of colleges you are applying to with due dates**

**Step 3:** If you are using the Common Application or need your letters of recommendation submitted electronically, make sure you have the recommendation links emailed to your counselor. Make sure you have your counselor's correct email address!

**Ms. Jurkovich's email address: [kjurkovich@alamedaunified.org](mailto:kjurkovich@alamedaunified.org)**

**Step 4:** Check in one-two weeks before your letter is due to make sure your counselor submitted your letter.