

College Application Process: Letters of Recommendation

What is a letter of recommendation?

Letters of recommendation are vital pieces of your college application. While standardized test scores and GPA are important for determining if a school is the right academic fit, a letter of recommendation is an opportunity to personalize your application. Teachers and/or a counselor, who know you well, can write a letter explaining your academic potential, classroom behaviors, personality, and extracurricular achievements.

How do you know what your school requires?

Each college website will outline the specific requirements for their school's application. Requirements may vary with each school. You can access this information by going to the individual school website, clicking on the admission page, and searching for undergraduate application requirements.

Who should I ask?

Schools will typically ask for: 1 teacher recommendation, 2 teacher recommendations, a combination of a teacher and a counselor, or no letter of recommendation. You should be very thoughtful about who you ask. You should always have at least one core class teacher, preferably from junior year, who can clearly recommend your academic potential in an academic setting. This may not be the class where you had the highest grade, but the class where you have demonstrated active learning, asked questions or sought extra help, and engaged with the teacher. A counselor recommendation can provide admission counselors a more in-depth look at your experiences in high school. Counselor recommendations may highlight overall academic achievements, personal and/or academic hardships, and extracurricular accomplishments.

How do I ask someone for a recommendation?

First, it is vital to understand that writing a letter of recommendation takes time and is typically a task teachers perform outside of school hours. While teachers are happy to support their students, it is important to be mindful of their time. Second, two teacher recommendations are sufficient. Most schools will not review more than two so please limit it to two teachers. Third, it is important when you ask a teacher or counselor to provide a letter on your behalf that you are polite, you explain why you are choosing them specifically, and you ask each recommender what **you** can provide for them in order for them to have the information necessary to complete one. This year, the best way to ask for a letter, after doing all of your research, is to contact your specific teacher or counselor via email. If they are able to write a letter on your behalf, they will respond to you with what they need if it is not already completed.

For teachers: each teacher may request different information. Make sure your resume is complete, you have a copy of your transcripts, and you fill out any additional forms they provide, including the teacher recommendation form if applicable.

For counselors: please complete your resume and the counselor questionnaire located in Naviance under ABOUT ME. Resume, "Surveys from your School" ABOUT ME counselor questionnaire. Complete the "College Counselor Recommendation Form" on the East Lyme High School Counseling Class of 2023 Google Classroom Page