



College Newsletter Fall 2009



Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind. – Dr. Seuss

Making the Best Use of Recommendation Letters

Recommendation letters are often required as part of the college application process. Even if they are optional, it is often prudent to submit them. This newsletter will help you understand the role of recommendation letters in order that you may be able to make a wise selection of recommenders and enhance your chances of admission.

Colleges expect to learn something new about you from your recommendation letters. If they request the letters be written by a teacher, they want to know what type of student you are. Do you easily engage in discussions? Are you a leader? Are you curious in the classroom? Do you go beyond what is expected of you? Do you assist struggling students? Are you courteous and on time?

Other times, a college may ask for a letter from an "outside" recommender – an employer, a pastor, or even a peer. From this letter, colleges hope to learn more about your character and your personality.

Counselor recommendations are standard submissions for colleges. These letters describe you in the context of your senior class – your class rank, the rigor of your courses, your demonstrated leadership and involvement in school activities. A counselor can also address the issue of inconsistencies in your performance and disclose any special circumstances that may have impacted your academic record.

Students are most often asked to provide a recommendation letter from a teacher. When thinking about which teacher to ask, keep in mind that the teacher in whose class you performed the best may not write the best recommendation. Often, colleges prefer to hear the story of how you have overcome difficulty in order to succeed, or how diligently you pursued help in order to understand the material.

Also, be careful when asking someone for a recommendation. Maybe ask a question like, "Would you be able to write me a strong recommendation letter?" If the teacher says no, or even if you sense hesitation, it would be better to ask someone else.

Finally, provide the recommending teacher with a few written notes about what you remember about that particular class – what project you liked best or how a particular book impacted you. This can assist the teacher in writing a more anecdotal letter.

Please resist the temptation of submitting more letters of recommendation than are required by the college. Only consider this if the extra letter adds significantly new and different information about you.

While they are important, keep in mind that recommendation letters are not the most significant piece of the application. In fact, they almost always have less value than the rigor of the classes taken, grade point average, class rank, ACT or SAT, and your essays. However, they can be the determining factor for students on the edge of admission. So, choose your recommenders thoughtfully and wisely!

Advice from Heloise for College Students

- 1) Turn the computer keyboard upside down and shake it every once in a while to get crumbs out. It will work better.
- 2) Don't lug a huge box or jug of detergent to the laundry room. Instead, measure what you need into small plastic bags or cups.
- 3) If you overstuff a dryer, your clothes will take longer to dry and come out very wrinkled.
- 4) Dryer sheets are good to stuff in smelly shoes, gym bags, drawers and closets.
- 5) Every once in a while, clean the lounge microwave by heating a large bowl of water with slices of lemon or orange for a minute or two.

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Check it out ✓

www.kathrynmarch.com recommends the following website: www.collegegrazing.com to help you gain insight into what you might like and need in a college.