



Etiquette when Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

Choose well. Request recommendations from those who know you, since they will be better equipped to write a compelling recommendation for you.

Ask your potential recommender, “Do you feel you know me well enough to write a letter of recommendation for me for this particular position/program/school/scholarship/etc.?” rather than saying, “Will you write me a recommendation?” Asking if they feel comfortable writing one is a better approach and gives them a way out if they don’t.

Identify what function your recommender should have. Who can write the best recommendation for you for *this particular* position/program/school/scholarship/etc.?

It is appropriate to ask a teacher for a recommendation addressing your academic accomplishments and experiences, and when applying to colleges, for scholarships, academic internships, and special programs.

Start early. Ideally, give the person about three weeks, but never less than two weeks to complete the recommendation. Most teachers are very busy and have numerous recommendations to write, so you want to be courteous. Plus, rushing them might lead to a recommendation that isn’t as polished, specific or as positive as it could be.

Consider doing one or all of the following:

- Give your recommender an early deadline. Either let them know that you will pick up their recommendation early in order to send it as part of a complete application packet, or ask them to send the recommendation by a certain date.
- You want to give your recommender enough time to write a letter that includes specifics about your personal characteristics or accomplishments rather than "glittering generalities."
- Follow up in person at least one week before the letter is due to check in and see if your recommender needs any additional information from you
- Ask to be notified by email once the recommendation has been sent, if possible

Provide your recommenders with an EMHS Letter of Recommendation Form and a completed Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire. You can get the EMHS Letter of Recommendation Form in the Guidance Office. You can find the Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire in Naviance under About me>Surveys from your school>Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire.

Waive your right to read the letter. It is highly recommend that you do so. This reassures the reader that the instructor has written a candid letter. Studies have shown that confidential letters carry far more weight. In addition, writers are far more comfortable writing a complete, candid letter when they know the applicant will not have access to the text. If you fear that the letter

writer might not do justice to your achievements or might include negative information — well, that's a good sign you should not be asking that person for a letter of recommendation.

Be gracious. You need to say thank you and send a personalized thank you note to the individual who wrote your recommendation. (A handwritten note is often more deeply appreciated than an email.) That way, they will be more inclined to write you another recommendation if asked again. Finally, let your recommender know if you got the job, the scholarship, admitted, etc. It is nice to let us know if our efforts were fruitful!

**Adapted from the University of Irvine and Peterson's*

