



Tips for Writing Effective Counselor Letters of Recommendation

How Letters Help Us

In a holistic application review, letters of recommendation help our admissions committee understand how students engage as classmates and community members through concrete examples and evidence. These letters give us a sense of who applicants are beyond metrics like grades and test scores and what qualities they may bring to our campus.



What Letters Do

- Show examples of the student's involvement in academic and non-academic settings
- Describe the student's performance and impact throughout their entire high school experience
- Complement the school profile by highlighting school-specific programs, opportunities, or challenges the student faced

Letters Should Avoid

- Simply listing out the student's activities and achievements
- Emphasizing quantitative data that can be found elsewhere in the application
- Using ambiguous or hyperbolic language

Letters Should

- Provide context for the student within their graduating class while highlighting major strengths and impressive personal qualities
- Discuss the student's impact in their activities and the larger school community
- Note any special academic or extracurricular programs the student is involved in
- Include relevant family or personal circumstances the admissions committee should be aware of, such as death or illness in the family or a long commute to school
- Use anecdotes from a student's high school career to help the admissions committee envision how they might be a match for the university
- Use a format that makes sense to you as a writer, either paragraphs or an organized, bulleted list

Helpful Student Brag Sheet Questions

for Counselor Letters of Recommendation

When writing letters of recommendation, you can quickly consolidate information by using this student brag sheet. The following questions, while not exhaustive, may help you get answers that serve as evidence within your broader recommendation.

The Basics

- What excites you about going to college?
- What are you most proud of from your high school experience?
- Are there any challenges you faced inside or outside class? How did you overcome them?

Academic Experiences

- What subjects are you most interested in? Why?
- Which class has had the biggest impact on you? Why?
- What type of environment do you thrive in (hands-on, discussion-based, etc.)? Why?

Non-Academic Experiences

- Briefly describe an experience that has been important to your growth.
- In which activities outside the classroom do you feel like you've had the biggest impact? How? Which have had the biggest impact on you?
- Are there any special or unusual circumstances you've experienced (that you'd like to share) or is there anything that needs more clarification?



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counselor letter of recommendation.

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