

Tips for Writing Effective COUNSELOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



Why These Letters Matter

Your letter helps us see the full picture of who a student is beyond grades and test scores. At Hopkins, we're looking for students who bring people together, show up for their communities, engage across differences, and pursue their interests with genuine curiosity.

What Letters Do

- Share specific examples of how the student engages with classmates, friends, and their broader community—both inside and outside of school
- Describe how the student has grown and made an impact throughout high school
- Complement the school profile by highlighting school-specific programs, opportunities, or challenges the student faced

What to Avoid

- Simply listing activities and achievements
- Repeating numbers or data that can be found elsewhere in the application
- Using vague or exaggerated language

Letters Should

- Provide context for the student within their graduating class while highlighting their personal qualities
- Show how the student contributes—not just what they did, but how they made others feel
- Note any special academic or extracurricular programs the student is involved in, especially those not already included in the application
- Include relevant personal circumstances, such as death or illness in the family or a long commute to school
- Use anecdotes that help us picture how the student engages with their community and connects with others
- Use a format that makes sense to you as a writer, either paragraphs or an organized, bulleted list

Get in Touch

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HELPFUL STUDENT BRAG SHEET QUESTIONS

for Counselor Letters of Recommendation

These questions are designed to help you gather information that reveals how a student brings people together, supports their community, pursues their interests with curiosity, and engages with others. The answers can serve as evidence in your recommendation.

The Basics

- What excites you about going to college?
- What are you most proud of from your time in high school?
- Are there any challenges you faced inside or outside of the classroom? How did you work through them?

Academic Experiences

- What areas do you love learning about? Why do they hold significance for you?
- Which high school class has been your favorite so far? What made that course impactful?
- What learning opportunities are you excited to pursue in college? How do these plans align with your goals?

Non-Academic Experiences

- Describe a time you brought people together—organizing something, supporting a group, or being someone others count on.
- How do you show up for your friends, family, or community?
- Are there any special or unusual circumstances you've experienced or anything that needs more clarification?

Scan to see examples
of a counselor letter
of recommendation.

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