Understanding the recommendation process

Many colleges ask you to include letters of recommendation with your application. These letters are submitted by recommenders. A recommender's input helps clarify and support the information you share in your application. They also help inform colleges about your academic potential and how you would fit in with their community.

Did you know?

Each college can choose which types of other recommenders they accept.

Who are recommenders?

Recommenders are people who have worked with and supported you in your life. They can be individuals in your school — like counselors and teachers. They can also be people who worked with you in extracurricular activities, such as coaches or employers.

There are four recommender types in the Common App: counselors, teachers, other recommenders, and advisors.

Counselor

Counselors share information about you within the context of your entire class and school community. They submit several different forms, including your transcript. The counselor recommendation letter provides insights into your academic history. They can also share information about achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and personal interests.

Teacher

Teachers provide information about you in the context of their classroom. They have firsthand knowledge of your intellectual curiosity, creative thought, and writing quality. They can also contextualize your class behavior and work habits.

Other recommender

Other recommenders are individuals you have worked with outside of school. They can provide context around your hobbies, passions, and other responsibilities. The other recommender types available in the Common App are: arts teacher, clergy, coach, college access counselor, employer, family member, peer, or other.

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Advisor

An advisor can be anyone who is assisting you with your application process. One thing that makes the advisor role different, is that they do not submit any forms on your behalf. Advisors can track your application progress and see PDF preview of your application, if you choose to share it.

Recommendation requirements

Every college can choose how many letters of recommendation to require. They can also determine which recommender types they accept. To see a college's requirements, find their college information under My Colleges.

Asking for a letter of recommendation

Before inviting a recommender in your application, it's important to ask if they are willing to provide a recommendation first. It's best to ask in person, but an email is ok too. When asking, be respectful of your recommenders' time. You should ask for a letter of recommendation at least three weeks in advance of a deadline. The more advance notice you give, the more time they have to craft a well-written letter.

When you are ready to send your invitations, go to My Colleges. You can invite recommenders in any college's Recommenders and FERPA section. For more details about this process, check out the application guide on **commonapp.org**.

Supporting your recommenders

Counselors and teachers are asked to write letters of recommendation by many students. To help make the process easier for them, we created a set of questionnaires for you to fill out. The information you share will help them write a more personal and effective recommendation.

It's also a good idea to stay in contact with your recommenders. Help keep them updated on your application deadlines and other important information. You can also track the status of your recommendations within your application.

Don't forget to thank your recommenders for writing those letters! A thank you note goes a long way.

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