July 2025 Newsletter
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Letters of Recommendation and College Admissions

Colleges, especially those on the selective end of the spectrum, often require teacher letters of recommendation as part of a senior's application. Applicants and their families do well to take the following steps, as they strategize ways to obtain the most compelling letters.

- Step 1: students should revise their resume to include information that they want a teacher to know or mention in a letter. It is the responsibility of the student to provide that resume to teachers in electronic and physical formats.
- Step 2: with a parent, students should brainstorm highlights of the student's experience with a desired letter-writer teacher, especially, and in high school, generally. The student will need to spell these highlights out for a teacher, if they are less than obvious on the resume. For example, a student is applying to Aerospace Engineering programs, and a junior year Physics teacher is a desired letter-writer. That teacher is likely unaware that the applicant spent two days touring the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum during summer break before senior year. Such information is important and relevant to the Physics teacher's letter, but likely not stated on the student's resume.
- Step 3: once students have revised their resumes and possess a list of highlights, students are now ready to reach out to a desired teacher to schedule a brief meeting. Though the letter's content is the teacher's prerogative, students should still draw the teacher's attention to (1) the highlights of their high school experience and (2) the details of their resume. During this meeting, it is acceptable and welcome for the student to make certain requests about what a letter-writer mentions. For example, the future aerospace engineer (mentioned above) should ask the Physics teacher to mention the student's professional investment in the recommendation letter, an investment demonstrated by a multiday trip to a world-class museum.

With these steps in mind, a logical question is, who are the best teachers to approach? The simple answer is teachers, who know a student well academically (at least). If the teacher knows the applicant on a more personal level, then that is even better. Junior year teachers are better than sophomore or freshman year teachers, because a junior year teacher has had the applicant as a student more recently. Though compelling letters come from freshman and sophomore year teachers, too.

College admissions committees use letters for insight into an applicant, seeking information, perspective, and anecdotes that only come from a teacher. Following the advice set forth here is a good starting point for families and students. For more guidance within the domain of letters of recommendation, contact Dr. Riley at collegeapp101.com.

Newest College App 101 Service

College App 101 is excited to announce a new career aptitude service: Career Planning Session. This service is for students, who do not know what college major to declare or career path to pursue. The Career Planning Session is a meeting to discuss a high school student's prospective career choices and the education that such career prospects require. A pre-meeting assessment is required. Connect with Dr. Riley at collegeapp101.com and request more information today.

Summertime and the College Admissions Essay

With the 2024-25 school year in the books, now is the time for members of the high school class of 2026 to secure College App 101's essay revision service. Many college applications open on August 1, which is before the 2025-26 academic year begins. Forward-thinking members of the class of 2026 will write and revise their essays in order to begin submitting college apps in early August.

College App 101 Podcasts

Designed for college bound high school students and their parents, these podcasts are brief, informational, and entertaining. They are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and collegeapp101.com/podcasts/. Recent episodes:

- The Role of Parents in College Admissions
- Hats Off to the Class of 2025
- Interview with a Business Owner
- Admissions Essay Ideas and a Dear Aunt

Dates to Remember

- July 12: ACT test day
- Aug 1: regular registration deadline for the Sept 6 ACT
- Aug 8: regular registration deadline for the Aug 23 SAT
- Aug 12: late registration deadline for the Aug 23 SAT (fee increase)
- Aug 19: late registration deadline for the Sept 6 ACT (fee increase)
- Aug 23: SAT test day
- Aug 29: regular registration deadline for the Sept 13 SAT

Past College App 101 Newsletters

Past editions of the College App 101 Newsletter can be found here.