



## ***Requesting Letters of Recommendation***

Students - are you tired of working on your college applications yet? Frustrated with the personal essays? Running out of patience rewording answers to fit in the character limit? Then let's talk about the one piece of your college application you DON'T have to write – Letters of Recommendation! LORs are extremely important in the college application process – they are classified as a document of considerable importance among most admission officers and some colleges rank them above class rank and extracurriculars. In fact, they can be a deciding factor that helps you stand out not only during the admission process but also when being considered for scholarships and honors programs too! However, just because you don't write them doesn't mean you won't have to *work* for them. Here are several steps students can take to ensure that their recommenders have all the information needed to write exemplary letters:

1. **Think about *who you want writing your letter*** – – this should be someone who has taught you recently and knows you well so they can write about your work ethic, personality and contributions. Some universities require LORs from teachers in certain core subject areas and this emphasizes the importance of cultivating positive impressions and good relationships with all teachers.
2. **Ask them in person** – no matter how many teachers/counselors/faculty/staff members you are planning on asking letters from, don't just send them an email or invite them as a recommender in SCORIR. Ask them in person, visit them during office hours and then set up a meeting to have a conversation about you, your letter and your application deadlines.
3. **Ask in advance** – thoughtful, well-organized letters of recommendation take time, and chances are teachers will be asked for letters by numerous students. Respect their time and how demanding their schedules are by giving them plenty of notice (even as early as spring of your junior year) to work on your letter.
4. **Give them a summary of who you are** - once they have *agreed* to write you a letter, send them an email thanking them for taking their time to do you this favor. Then, provide them with a quick outline of who YOU are to make their writing process a little easier. Include things like your academic record, your plans for and after college, a summary of your learning profile and life in the classroom and details from your personal life so they can write about you – *the student and applicant* – and about you – *the individual with goals, interests and what makes you unique*.



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- 5. Wave your FERPA rights** – the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects your rights as a student to view your academic records. Waiving your rights to read your letters of recommendation allows your recommenders to write freely and lets colleges trust their objectivity, genuineness and authenticity.
- 6. Send follow-ups** – as we mentioned earlier, teachers have very, very, very busy schedules. Between preparing for classes, creating lesson plans, attending meetings, conducting tutorials, grading, and balancing their personal lives, it isn't a bad idea to send a follow-up email or speak to your teacher again in person a few weeks away from your application deadline.
- 7. Don't forget to thank them** – it's a simple act that they will really appreciate. Teachers, faculty and staff are not mandated to write letters of recommendation, and they do have the option to decline. If they agree to write a LOR for you, it is because they like you and want to see you succeed. Keep them updated on any acceptance offers you receive; they will be ecstatic for you and knowing that they helped you reach your dream!



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