

## **Letters of Recommendation**

So, you want a letter of recommendation? Before you ask any of your teachers for one, here are a few things you need to consider:

### **How well does the teacher know you?**

If the answer is that he or she has only known you a month or so, think about asking a team coach, a club advisor, or a teacher from the previous two years. Also, do not be afraid to ask a math, science, physical education, or a social studies teacher to write a letter for you. Many of them have been writing for years and have an outstanding command of the English language.

### **What information have you provided?**

You need to make sure that you give every teacher you are asking to write a letter a copy of your resume, a description of your involvement and progress (academic and extra-curricular) at school, and specific information about the scholarship or school to which you are applying. Remember that the more information you provide, the easier it will be for teachers to write fabulous things about you.

### **How much time have you given the teacher to write the letter?**

At least one week advance notice is usually acceptable; however, this depends on the teacher. Please check with the teacher to see if he/she requires more than one week advance notice.

### **Have you filled out the recommendation form to the fullest extent possible, and have you provided a stamped envelope?**

Most recommendations require a form that includes your name, signature, etc. Make sure that you give this COMPLETED form to your teacher when you make your request. In addition, if the form is supposed to be sealed and mailed separately from your application, make sure that you have also given the teacher a STAMPED and ADDRESSED (typed, not hand written) envelope with your form so that it can be mailed promptly. Also, if the recommendation is required to be confidential, make sure that you do not ask to see it before it is mailed because you are then asking the teacher to do something that is unethical.

### **What has your performance and attitude been like for the instructor you wish to write a letter?**

Teachers, by nature, like students – that is why many of us decided to teach. However, when it comes to writing a letter of recommendation, if you have not performed well in a class, the fact that we like you cannot make up for your performance. If you have made a habit of not turning work in on time, or of exhibiting a consistently “underwhelming” attitude, be prepared for the instructor to mention this in the letter or for the instructor to refuse to write a letter for you.

### **Do you actually intend to use this letter, or are you merely “shopping” for the best letters?**

Do not ask a teacher to write a letter unless you actually intend to use it. Again, these letters take time, and to ask a teacher to write one just to see what he or she says is simply rude.

### **Did you thank the teacher?**

Remember that what you are asking the teacher to do is not something that is part of the official job description. In other words, it is a favor. Make sure that you take the time to write a thank you note after the letter has been written. Again, these letters do take time and some effort to compose so you should put some time and effort into composing a sincere thank you note neatly written on something more formal than notebook paper (invest in some stationery or nice writing paper). Typed thank you notes are also acceptable as long as you sign your name to them. In some cases, chocolate is a proper way to say thank you 😊