



## Letters of Recommendation

**How many letters of recommendation do I need?** It depends on the college. Generally, one or two letters are required. Sometimes, for programs such as music or art, or for athletes, a third letter is recommended or required. You are responsible for knowing what is required by each of your colleges.

**Is it OK to submit more letters than are required?** Again, this depends on the college. Some are quite firm about limiting the number of letters. Follow the guidelines. “No more than two letters of recommendation” means exactly that. Some colleges allow an additional letter only if it “provides a different perspective.” Discuss your plans with Mrs. Schweber before submitting any extra letters.

**Who should write my letters of recommendation?** It is very common for colleges to recommend or even require that you submit recommendations from your English and Mathematics teachers. If no guidelines are given, then choose the teachers who know you best.

**Can a well-connected family friend write a recommendation for me?** In most cases, this is not a good idea. Colleges want to hear from people who can discuss your work knowledgeably, and many colleges limit the number of letters you may submit. Choosing a family friend, no matter how well-connected, can backfire by making you appear to be someone who was unable to get letters from your teachers. If you are wait-listed, though, some colleges encourage you to submit additional recommendations. At this point, a letter from an alum of the college who knows you well would be an asset.

**What is the waiver, and should I sign it?** According to the Buckley Amendment, you have the right to see your letters of recommendation and other application materials, unless you waive your right to do so. **It is very important that you sign these waivers, giving up your right to see your letters of recommendation.**

**Why should I waive my right to see my letters of recommendation?** Colleges take a recommendation more seriously if they know that your teachers have written with complete candor. Many teachers will not write a recommendation unless the student has waived his/her right to see the letter.

**What should I say when asking for a recommendation letter?** We will role play this as one of our Advisory activities so that you will be comfortable making these requests. Your teachers are pleased to help you out in this way and want the best for you. Don't be nervous. Asking for a reference is a life skill; this is a good opportunity to perfect it.

**Can recommendations be submitted online?** If you are using the Common Application and submitting it online, your teachers may submit their letters online. **MCDS strongly**

**recommends that you submit materials online and that your letters of recommendation also be submitted online.** If a teacher prefers to submit a recommendation on paper, he/she will need to submit it directly to the college. The Common Application does not accept recommendations by mail.

**What should I provide to a teacher who is writing a letter for me?** Give the teacher the following:

Name of the college

Whether it is a Common Application school or not

The deadline, and whether it is “received by” or “postmarked by”

For letters to be submitted online, provide the link to the website (Common Application or the college, if it doesn’t use the Common Application).

For letters that must be submitted by mail, provide the appropriate form and a stamped, addressed envelope. MCDS does not supply envelopes or stamps.

**Do teachers write a different letter for each college?** Sometimes teachers customize your letter (for example, if they attended or taught at the college, or have some other tie to it), but usually they write one letter and it goes to multiple colleges.

**So if I want to add a college after requesting letters, can I do that?** Yes, but you must give the teacher plenty of time to process your request. Do not expect that he/she will be able to send out a letter, even one that is already written, the same day. Giving him/her at least a week is a good idea.

**Should I write a thank you note?** Yes. Not only is it polite to do so, but doing so can serve as a gentle and respectful reminder that a deadline is approaching. We will discuss how to write a good thank you note, and look at some examples, during Advisory.