

Letters of Recommendation

This lesson is designed to help students learn the importance of obtaining a letter of recommendation for college and/or a job application.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Learn about letters of recommendation
2. Find out how to add recommenders and request a letter of recommendation through MEFA Pathway
3. Learn how to track recommendation requests using MEFA Pathway
4. Evaluate who knows them well and would make good recommenders

ACTIVITIES

PART 1

Content Knowledge

Familiarize students with the concept of letters of recommendation. Explain that as colleges try to assess student's abilities, work ethic, and personality, they rely on the perspectives of teachers, school counselors, and coaches. Most colleges require one or more letters of recommendation, and provide guidelines as to who can write the recommendation(s), and how each one should be structured. Review the following tips with students:

1. **Ask early.** It's both helpful and courteous to make these requests as early as possible, ideally during the end of your junior year. This shows personal responsibility on your part, and gives those you ask plenty of time to plan and write a thoughtful letter.
2. **Share your interests.** Explain to your recommenders what you plan to study in college. This information can help them highlight qualities that you want to emphasize in your college applications.
3. **Meet (don't exceed) the requirements.** If a college asks for two letters of recommendation, only send two. You'll want to show that you can read and follow directions, and that you respect the time of the admissions staff reviewing your application.
4. **Ask people who know you well.** Think about the teachers who are familiar with your academic strengths and abilities, and have taught you for a full academic year. You'll want someone who can speak to your participation in class and your work ethic, as well as your ability to learn the subject matter. In most cases, teachers from your junior year core subjects are best.

Grade Level: 10-12

MEFA PATHWAY SECTIONS WITHIN THIS LESSON:

- My College Applications

SUBJECT AREAS:

- College Applications

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Letter of Recommendation Worksheet (included)
- Internet connection to work with the MEFA Pathway website

Email any questions to:
info@mefapathway.org

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LESSON PLAN

5. **Follow the rules.** Follow your high school's policy on how and when to request college letters of recommendation, noting any specific applications or forms to complete or online accounts to update (*School Counselor: Share with your students your school's specific policy*)
6. **Show gratitude.** Send a (written) thank you note to everyone who took the time to write you a college recommendation letter. Showing appreciation is courteous and confirms your upstanding character.

PART 2

Applying Information

- Have students use their MEFA Pathway *My College Applications* list within the *Manage Applications* tab to record and keep track of letters of recommendation.
- To add a letter of recommendation to a college, students should click the *ADD/EDIT RECOMMENDERS* box and select *Add Recommender*. From there students can choose from the dropdown menu if the recommender is a counselor, teacher, or other (note: if a student selects teacher, the student will also be able to select the teacher's subject). The student should then enter the recommender's name and email address and click *SAVE*. Once the student has added the recommender, the student will always have the option to edit or delete that person.
- Once the recommender is added, the student can request a letter from that teacher for any college on the student's list. To do so, within a college's expanded block, the student can click *REQUEST* next to any teacher's name. This will bring up a pop-up box of text that will be sent via email to the recommender. The email text is pre-filled, but the student can customize the text and add attachments, such as a resume. Once the student sends the email, the status of the recommendation will say "Requested" next to the recommender's name with the date the email was sent.
- The recommender will receive the email along with the mailing address of the school where he or she can send the letter. If the student does not hear back from the recommender, the student has the option to resend the email.

PART 3

Evaluating Information

Now that students have an understanding of how to request letters of recommendation, ask students to discuss and answer the following question: When and in what situations will they need to obtain a letter of recommendation, and who would be an appropriate person to write the letter of recommendation?

After the discussion, have students take notes on the following content.

You may possibly need to obtain a letter of recommendation for several instances:

- College application
- Job application
- Scholarship application
- Internship application
- Job promotion consideration

You could ask the following individuals for a letter of recommendation based on the situation. Who would be good individuals in your life for you to ask?

- School Counselor
- Teacher
- Boss
- Supervisor
- Coach

NOTE: Ask people who really know your talents, strengths, and capabilities. Don't be afraid to ask non-traditional people as well, though you will want to have teachers from your core subjects write your letters of recommendation for college. For example, if you are passionate about volunteering, you might want to ask an organization you volunteer for to write a letter for recommendation for a scholarship application.

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Critical Thinking/Creative Application

The recommender will want as much information as possible about the student in order to write a thorough and accurate letter of recommendation. To make sure the recommender has enough information, have students complete the attached Letter of Recommendation Worksheet. This will help students brainstorm what they have accomplished and who can best speak to those accomplishments. The student should also include the worksheet as an attachment in the email to the recommender. This way the recommender will see all of the student's achievements and can mention them in the letter. Students may also want to attach a resume to their email. They can create a resume in MEFA Pathway by navigating to *Resume Builder* under the *Create Profile* tab. Here the student can select the information to include on the resume, export the resume as a Word document or PDF, and attach it to the email.

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Letter of Recommendation Worksheet

Name:

Date:

Email Address:

Please list any awards and/or honors you have received:

Please list any school activities you have been involved in and what positions you held:

Please list any community service and/or volunteer activities you have been involved in:

Please list any work and/or internship experiences you have had:

Please list any AP classes you have taken:

Please list any talents or skills in any field such as art, music, science, literature, or mathematics:

Please describe yourself in one paragraph. Discuss your future goals for college and career. Include your interests, character traits, and personal strengths. Include any information not already included that might be helpful to the person writing this letter.

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CATEGORY	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	SATISFACTORY 2	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1
Content Accuracy	All content on the worksheet is accurate. There are no factual errors.	Most of the content is accurate but there is one piece of information that seems inaccurate.	The content is generally accurate, but one piece of information is clearly inaccurate.	The content is confusing or contains more than one factual error.
Sequencing of Information	The information is organized in a clear, logical way.	Most information is organized in a clear, logical way.	Some information is logically sequenced.	There is no clear plan for the organization of information.
Effectiveness	The worksheet includes all material needed to give a good understanding of the student.	The worksheet is lacking one or two key elements.	The worksheet is missing more than two key elements.	The worksheet is lacking several key elements and has inaccuracies.
Font Choice & Formatting	Font formats (size, bold, italic) have been carefully planned to enhance readability and content.	Font formats have been carefully planned to enhance readability.	Font formats have been carefully planned to complement the content. It may be a little hard to read.	Font formatting makes it very difficult to read the material.
Conventions. Student uses proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	The worksheet has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	The worksheet has 1- 2 misspellings, but no grammatical errors.	The worksheet has 1- 2 grammatical errors but no misspellings.	The worksheet has more than 2 grammatical and/or spelling errors.

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