

Writing Teacher Recommendations

Teacher Recommendation

Puts the student in context of **YOUR** class
Focuses on academic achievement/
development in **YOUR** class

vs.

Counselor Recommendation

Puts the student in context of the entire school
Focuses on **OVERALL** academic and
personal development

Questions to ask as you're writing:

- Does the student strive to improve?
- Does the student take constructive criticism well?
- What initiatives has the student taken in the classroom?
- Is the student an enthusiastic learner?

DO:

- Be honest.
- Be concise. (One page is fine!)
- Use conversational language.
- Set a positive tone.
- Briefly describe the “culture” of your classroom in terms of teaching style, expectations, type of assignments. It might be helpful to include how long you’ve been teaching.
- Use specific examples and superlatives:
 - Follow the advice “Show, don’t tell”
 - Expressions such as “*the best student I have taught in 20 years*” or “*exceptionally gifted*” will be taken seriously by an admissions officer
- Use evaluative and comparative statements, such as “*highest grade on the exam*” or “*leader of classroom discussions,*” or “*one of only 2 A’s I gave in that section*”.
- Use anecdotes to highlight:
 - Evidence of intellectual ability
 - Attitude in class
 - Written work (using samples from essays is great!)
 - In-class discussion, verbal skills
 - Confidence, maturity
 - Reaction to setbacks/criticism
 - Inquiring attitude of mind
 - Relationship to classmates and faculty
 - Willingness to take academic risks

(over)

DON'T:

- Comment on a student's appearance
- Use generic words like "nice" or "hard-working"
- Use the same phrases over and over again. Colleges start to notice if they're getting "form" letters from teachers. This undermines your credibility as well as your school's.
- Mention the college/university by name UNLESS the student has asked you specifically to do so and/or you have knowledge of that school and why the student wishes to go there.
- Reiterate all of the school activities in which the student participates UNLESS you have served as an advisor/moderator/coach for that activity OR you have witnessed the student's level of engagement and can provide specific examples.
- Highlight what the student is NOT in order to make a positive point. For example: *"He is not a top scholar, nor is he one of the easily recognizable leaders on campus, yet he is one of the students who make our community so positive."* The final thought is nice, but you lost the support of your reader in the first part of the sentence. Simply state the positives: *"He is willing to do the day-to-day tasks that make our campus community run smoothly; he does so without requiring the spotlight."*
- Strain for effect. Not many students walk on water, and admissions officers don't expect that. Your enthusiasm does not necessarily matter as much as the evidence you provide.

Impact Words:

Word choice makes a difference! Use active, descriptive "impact words" to highlight specific qualities of the student. No one student will embody all these characteristics, but the following list can guide you in selecting a handful of appropriate descriptors:

accommodating	courteous	ingenuity	resourceful
affable	creative	inventive	respected
alert	decency	mature	responsible
ambitious	dedicated	meticulous	scholarly
aptitude	determined	modest	scrupulous
astute	diligent	motivated	self-reliant
authentic	disciplined	observant	self-starter
aware	eloquent	perseverance	sharp
balanced	engaged	persistent	superior
clever	focused	proficient	tactful
confident	genuine	prepared	technical
conscientious	honest	prudent	tenacious
cooperative	idealism	refreshing	trustworthy
courageous	industrious	reliable	unassuming

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing all the relevant questions below, give this form to a teacher who has taught you an **academic** subject (for example, English, foreign language, math, science, or social studies). Please also give that teacher stamped envelopes addressed to each institution that requires a Teacher Evaluation.

Legal name _____ Female
 Male
Last/Family (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth date _____ Social Security # _____
mm/dd/yyyy (Optional)

Address _____
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend _____ CEEB/ACT code _____

IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE: Under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), after you matriculate you *will* have access to this form and all other recommendations and supporting documents submitted by you and on your behalf after matriculating, unless at least one of the following is true:


1. The institution does not save recommendations post-matriculation (see list at www.commonapp.org/FERPA).
2. You waive your right to access below, regardless of the institution to which it is sent:
 - Yes, I do waive my right to access, and I understand I will never see this form or any other recommendations submitted by me or on my behalf.
 - No, I do *not* waive my right to access, and I may someday choose to see this form or any other recommendations or supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf to the institution at which I'm enrolling, if that institution saves them after I matriculate.

Signature  _____ Date _____

TO THE TEACHER

The Common Application membership finds candid evaluations helpful in choosing from among highly qualified candidates. A photocopy of this reference form, or another reference you may have prepared on behalf of this student, is acceptable. You are encouraged to keep the original of this form in your private files for use should the student need additional recommendations. Please return it to the appropriate admission office(s) in the envelope(s) provided to you by this student. Please submit your references promptly. **Be sure to sign below.**

Teacher's name (Mr./Ms./Dr., etc.) _____ Subject taught _____
Please print or type

Signature  _____ Date _____
mm/dd/yyyy

Secondary school _____

School address _____
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

Teacher's phone (_____) _____ Teacher's e-mail _____
Area Code Number Ext.

Background Information

How long have you known this student and in what context? _____

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe this student? _____

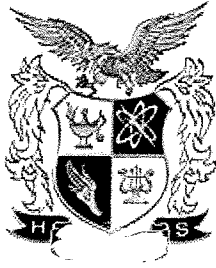
List the courses you have taught this student, noting for each the student's year in school (10th, 11th, 12th; first-year, sophomore; etc.) and the level of course difficulty (AP, IB, accelerated, honors, elective; 100-level, 200-level, etc.).

Please detach along perforation

Ratings Compared to other students in his or her class year, how do you rate this student in terms of:

	No basis	Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few I've encountered (top 1%)
Academic achievement								
Intellectual promise								
Quality of writing								
Creative, original thought								
Productive class discussion								
Respect accorded by faculty								
Disciplined work habits								
Maturity								
Motivation								
Leadership								
Integrity								
Reaction to setbacks								
Concern for others								
Self-confidence								
Initiative, independence								
OVERALL								

Evaluation Please write whatever you think is important about this student, including a description of academic and personal characteristics, as demonstrated in your classroom. We welcome information that will help us to differentiate this student from others. (Feel free to attach an additional sheet or another reference you may have prepared on behalf of this student.)



High School

Georgia
Telephone (770)
Fax (770)
<http://www>

**Sample Teacher
Recommendation Letter**

**Public School Teacher
#1**

Low Effectiveness

November 18, 2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is my pleasure to recommend _____ to your prestigious college. She is a beautiful girl who is popular with her peers. _____ is a good student who has never had any discipline issues at school. She is a model student. She is a member of the Beta Club, the Spanish Club, and the Spanish Honor Society. She was a PEERS member in 9th Grade, and she would of made the varsity dance team in 10th Grade if she had not injured her ankle. She is a member of her youth group and of the gospel choir at her church. She is nice and well mannered and she works hard in school. _____ is admired by all who come in contact with her. Her dream is to become a doctor and she truly deserves a chance to attend the University of Oglethorpe. She will go on to succeed in everything she tries to do! I hope you will consider her application favorably.

Sincerely,

English Teacher
High School



HIGH SCHOOL

**Sample Teacher
Recommendation Letter**

Public School Teacher

#2

Medium Effectiveness

October 15, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to endorse the candidacy of _____ for admission to your institution for the 2009 – 2010 school year. _____ was a student in my Advanced Algebra II Class at _____ High School last year. She is a hard-working and mature young lady who displayed excellent work and study habits. She consistently showed a willingness to tackle any task at hand and tenacity when she encountered an unusually difficult concept.

_____ is a member of the Thespian Honor Society, the National Forensic League, and was awarded the Outstanding Leadership Award for Honor Choir. She is a talented member of our school band and our theater department.

She is well-liked and respected by her teachers and popular with her peers. I recommend her for admission to your school without reservation.

Sincerely,

High School

RECEIVED
NOV 03 2008
BY: _____

**Sample Teacher
Recommendation Letter**

Public School Teacher

#3

High Effectiveness

Social Studies
High School

Georgia

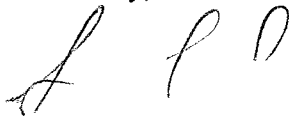
To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked to write a letter of recommendation for _____ and I would like to take this opportunity to describe some of her talents. I have known _____ for over 3 years as she was a student in my ninth-grade Gifted World Geography class at High School.

_____ is a mature young lady and was a class leader, and I am confident she will excel in the honors system. I found her to be a highly motivated self-starter, as well as respectful of other students. _____ was also helpful to other students during our study sessions. In World Geography all the exams were essay and her writing was superior. I found detail and analysis that other students were not able to provide. Last year, during _____'s junior year, I frequently would see her before school started, reviewing and reading her Advanced Placement United States History in preparation for class. It was rewarding to see a former student succeed on the most difficult advanced placement exam. I also am aware that _____ holds down a part-time job and has worked at the same business for over a year while keeping her academic commitments. I would place _____ in the top 20% of all the students I have taught.

I can not foresee any circumstances in which she would disappoint doing college-level work. I am certain she will be a success at whatever she chooses to do and I am pleased to give her my full recommendation to Oglethorpe University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A P O'.