

# 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. 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 students' 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: 11

MEFA PATHWAY SECTIONS  
WITHIN THIS LESSON:

- My Journal

DOMAIN:

- College and Career Exploration

TIME:

- 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Internet connection to work with the MEFA Pathway website

FUTURE READY SKILLS:

- Communication
- Organization

VOCABULARY:

- Letter of Recommendation

Email any questions to:  
[k12support@mefa.org](mailto:k12support@mefa.org)



# 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.

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## PART 2

### 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?

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

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

Students could ask the following individuals for a letter of recommendation based on the situation.

- School Counselor
- Teacher
- Boss
- Supervisor
- Coach

After the discussion, have students create an entry in their *My Journal* under the *About Me* tab in MEFA Pathway. Have students reflect on the possible instances in which they might need a letter of recommendation. For those instances have students identify who they might ask and why.

Note for students: 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.

## PART 3

### 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. When students request a letter of recommendation in MEFA Pathway, they may want to attach a resume to their email. They can create a resume in MEFA Pathway by navigating to *My Resume* under the *About Me* 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.

# Letters of Recommendation Grading Rubric

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CATEGORY	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	SATISFACTORY 2	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1
Content Accuracy	All content on the journal entry 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 journal entry includes all material needed to give a good understanding of the student.	The journal entry is lacking one or two key elements.	The journal entry is missing more than two key elements.	The journal entry 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 journal entry has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	The journal entry has 1- 2 misspellings, but no grammatical errors.	The journal entry has 1- 2 grammatical errors but no misspellings.	The journal entry has more than 2 grammatical and/or spelling errors.