



1 Research your options

2 Finance your studies

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**Your 5 Steps
to U.S. Study**



Recommendation letters

Teacher recommendations

Teacher recommendations play an important role in the competitive admissions process. Most college applications will require letters of recommendation from two teachers who have taught you—at least one of those should have been during Year 12.

EducationUSA recommends that you approach your teachers at the start of Year 12. Think about who you would like to write these letters and make a time to discuss your interest in applying to U.S. colleges. A face-to-face meeting will allow both of you to ask any questions—about your application; the process; and expectations for the letter.

You should consider putting together some information for your chosen teachers so they are aware of your interests, activities, skills and strengths (in and out of school). It could also be helpful to provide them with a list of the U.S. colleges you are hoping to apply to.

Remember:

- Your teachers are not obligated to provide a recommendation or share with you what they write.
- Teachers are busy and have demands on their time—respect this.
- The more organized you are in making your request, the better the recommendation you may receive.

Choose your recommenders carefully

- Consider choosing teachers from the field you are intending to study in college who could emphasize your relevant skillset.
- Ask teachers who know you well—not necessarily those in whose classes you performed the best. While a teacher who gave you As might be the obvious choice, a better indicator of your college potential may come from the teacher of a class in which you struggled to do well, but to whom you demonstrated your persistence and motivation to improve.
- Letters of recommendation should contain information and impressions of you that cannot be found in other sections of the application.



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Recommendation letter tips

What goes in a recommendation letter from teachers?

- One page should be sufficient.
- Introduce yourself at the start of the letter—include the subject(s) you teach, how long you have taught the subject(s) and how long you have known the student.
- Consider the student's work habits, adaptability to new situations, resourcefulness, initiative and emotional maturity.
- Is the student one to consistently engage in discussion? What motivates this person? What are their strengths, talents, leadership abilities?
- Are there any unusual family or community circumstances of which the admissions officer should be aware?
- A story or incident that illustrates the student's character or ability is more telling than a statement like, 'Tom is very intelligent'.
- Go beyond a student's grades and academic performance. Colleges want teachers to write about their experience with the student in the classroom.

What are admissions officers looking for?

- A well-written letter that highlights the student's impressive characteristics—who they are and how they might contribute to the intellectual and social communities on their campus.
- Examples of the student's achievements.
- Information that cannot be found in the other parts of the application—building a picture of the student behind the grades.
- A letter that brings the applicant to life on the page.

Helpful Websites

[For Career Practitioners](#)

[For Teachers](#)

Watch Boston University's Director of International Admissions, Dr Anne Corriveau, explain the holistic application process and what admissions officers are looking for:

["What's the tip factor to get you in?"](#)

