



## HOW TO REQUEST A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation strengthen your application by providing details about your personal background, character, academic preparation, work experiences, and extracurricular activities. You want to get letters that highlight your background and strengths, but you want each letter to reflect a different dimension of your skills.

**Read the application instructions.** Application information will outline how many letters you can submit and who is eligible to write you a letter. The Stanford Medical Youth Science Program (SMYSP) asks for recommendations from specific people, such as a math or science teacher

**Ask people who know you well and know the quality of your academic work to write you letters of recommendation.** Consider the following when choosing whom to ask for letters of recommendation:

- Does each recommender know you well enough to write a strong letter?
- Which set of people can write letters that will best reflect your background and strengths?

**Guide those who are writing your letters of recommendation.** Once you decide whom you are going to ask, think about the different aspects of your background, character, academics, and activities that you want reflected in your letters. Provide each recommender a copy of our *Recommender Information Sheet* (which is included in this document). Some additional items you may ask those individuals writing on your behalf to mention are:

- Your personal background and family situation.
- Your personal goals and skills.
- Hardships you have experienced in higher education. (For example, will you be the first in your family to attend college? Have you experienced a drop in grades due to a family illness?) Be sure to briefly mention, but do not dwell, on hardships; rather, highlight, in detail, how you persevered through this hardship and succeeded.
- Personal strengths that will make you a good participant. (Are you inquisitive, motivated, and hard working?)
- Your commitment to other students and your community, as demonstrated by your volunteer work, willingness to help other students, and involvement in humanitarian causes.
- Your leadership skills and experiences.

**Write to those you want to write letters on your behalf.** (See *Student Sample: Requesting a Letter of Recommendation* in this document.) When you finish your list of what you want each recommender to emphasize, write a formal letter requesting they write you a letter of recommendation.

- Schedule the meeting at least a month before your letters are due.
- Your letters should be personalized to each recommender and should include a list of specific skills and attributes you want them to emphasize.
- Present your letter when you meet with each recommender in person.
- Ask that the recommender compose his or her letter on school or business letterhead stationery and, as applicable, upload a PDF (or other accepted file format) of the recommendation letter.
- Include a suggested date to have the letter completed.
- Finally, thank them for supporting you and writing the letter.

**Follow up and say thank you.** After you meet with each of the professionals who have agreed to write recommendation letters for you, make a note in your calendar to follow-up with them in a few weeks to be sure that they will have the letter for you to pick up before your application packet is due. After you receive the letter, write and send a personal thank-you note to each professional.



## RECOMMENDER INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Recommender:

A student is applying for admission to the 2015 Stanford Medical Youth Science Program (SMYSP) at Stanford University. SMYSP is held on Stanford's campus for low-income and underrepresented minority high school students interested in science, medicine, and health. Low-income students from **all** ethnic backgrounds are welcome to apply. Your honest appraisal of this student and his or her potential to contribute to and benefit from participation in SMYSP will be greatly appreciated.

Recommendations will be uploaded into our ApplyWeb system. Instructions will be emailed to you once the student submits an online request for you. Please compose your letter on your organization's letterhead, and upload the document (a PDF is preferred) of your signed letter. You will receive an email confirmation once your letter has been submitted.

As you write your letter of recommendation, please comment on the specific criteria the student is asking you to include, keeping in mind the student characteristics (listed below) we would like to see discussed. Your personal contact information should also be included. We request that your letter of recommendation be between 300-1000 words in length.

### Personal Contact Information

1. Your name
2. Your position or title
3. Your phone and email contact information
4. How long, and in what capacity you have known the applicant.

### Student Characteristics

- Ability in science
- Interest in health
- Independence in thinking
- Written expression
- Oral communication
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Punctuality
- Sense of responsibility
- Leadership potential
- Creativity
- Motivation, energy, and initiative
- Ability to adapt to new situations
- Preparation for college
- Family background / hardships

Please note that the student's application **will not be complete** until both required recommendations are successfully uploaded, and that incomplete applications will not be considered. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Judith Ned, Ed.D., M.Ed.  
SMYSP Director



## **STUDENT SAMPLE: REQUESTING A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

*Stanford Medical Youth Science Program applicant: Use this sample letter of recommendation format to write your letter to each of your chosen recommenders.*

(Date)

Dear Ms./Mr. Recommender:

Thank you for being willing to write me a letter of recommendation in support of my application to the 2016 Stanford Medical Youth Science Program (SMYSP). This letter will give you a better idea of the classes and activities that I have been involved with during high school.

Another person I am asking to write a letter of recommendation for me is: John Doe (Biology Teacher).

I am asking each person to focus on different aspects of my background, character, academics, and activities so that the SMYSP Selection Committee will get a broad sense of my life and academic preparation.

Could you please comment on some of the following points in your letter?

- **SMYSP applicant: List your specific criteria (different aspects of your background, character, academics, and activities) each recommender should address. See *How to Request a Letter of Recommendation* in this document for details.**

I appreciate you taking the time to write this letter of recommendation. Please let me know if you need any other information from me. Your support means a lot!

Details on submitting your online recommendation will be sent in an email once I submit your recommendation request. Please note that my application will not be complete until both required recommendations are successfully uploaded, and that incomplete applications will not be considered. Please submit this recommendation on or before the application deadline of February 15, 2016.

Thank you again.

*Your Signature*

Your Name