

College Recommendation Process

Dea Haupt, LHS Math Dept.

- First, read this document and decide whether you want me to write a recommendation for you. Talk to me if you're unsure.
- Complete a brief questionnaire about yourself and your college plans.
- Bring me the recommendation paperwork for each college (see instructions) including addressed stamped envelopes. Note that I only write confidential recommendations sent directly to the colleges (see below for my reasons). You must submit your paperwork on time; see the instructions for the deadlines, and do not miss those deadlines (the first one is October 21, for applications due in November).

What I need to receive from you

1. A one-page checklist for my use listing the colleges for which you need letters and their application deadlines. List the schools in order by their deadline dates. If you need to add or delete any schools, please provide an updated version of your checklist.
2. Any updated information about how to reach you or about your academic accomplishments.
3. For each college, a form on which you have signed a waiver making the recommendation letter confidential.
 - * If the college has a recommendation form that includes a confidentiality waiver, you can just give me that form.
 - * If the college has a recommendation form without a confidentiality waiver section, you should give me both the college's form and a signed copy of my form, Cover Sheet for Confidential Reference Letter.
 - * If the college doesn't have its own recommendation form, just fill out my Cover Sheet for Confidential Reference Letter form.

In any case, I will be attaching to the form a letter that I've written, and mailing the recommendation directly to the college. As is the general practice at LHS, I normally do not complete the check boxes on application forms (characterizations such as "top 10%" tend to work against you when you're at a school with lots of good students). However, if you have a strong preference that you would like me to use the check boxes, see me to discuss.
4. For each college, a stamped, addressed envelope for mailing the recommendation. Please use this return address: Dea Haupt; Mathematics Department; Lexington High School; 251 Waltham Street; Lexington, MA 02421.

5. Optional: If you have prepared drafts of any college application essays (especially those in which you discuss your interests and future goals), it would be useful to have copies (these will help me ensure that what I have written fits together well with what you are saying in your applications).

Deadlines (really important, no exceptions)

I need you to meet my deadlines so that I can meet the application deadlines for you and all other students, along with my teaching responsibilities. I can't make exceptions to these dates.

If your application is due in:	I need everything from you by:
November, 2008	Friday, October 21, 2008
December, 2008	Monday, November 10, 2008
January, 2009 or later	Friday, December 12, 2008

When you get admitted to colleges

Let me know, I want to be among the first to congratulate you! Especially if an early admission means you'll no longer be applying to certain other schools, contact me right away, as it will save me some work.

Please, no senior slump!

This last request applies if you happen to have me for calculus in your senior year. Occasionally I've had the experience of writing a glowing recommendation for a student, only to see his/her work habits decline in the second half of senior year. This leaves me feeling stupid to have written such a positive letter for a student who wasn't really very committed to learning. So if you've asked me to write about what a good student you are, please accord me the respect of living up to the recommendation during your remaining time in my class. I'd hate to see our academic relationship end up any other way. Thanks.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Will you write me a recommendation?

A. I write recommendations for nearly all students who ask me by the end of junior year. However, I reserve the discretion to decline writing a recommendation for any particular student (in which case, I will let you know promptly after your initial request, while you still have plenty of time to ask another teacher).

Q. What if I don't ask for a recommendation until senior year?

A. Unfortunately I cannot accommodate requests from students who don't ask me until senior year.

Q. I got one of my lower grades in your class. Can you still write me a letter?

A. Most likely yes. There are usually positive things to write about your accomplishments and work habits. In fact, a letter from me could help explain the context of a lower grade: that academic expectations in the course were high. For example, I've written letters for students who received B-'s and C+'s in Honors Advanced Math, and their applications have worked out well.

Q. Is there any kind of student who should not ask for a recommendation?

A. You should not ask me for a recommendation if you have ever cheated or taken an unfair advantage in my class. I may know about your cheating even if I didn't have enough evidence to "catch" you; don't put me in the uncomfortable position of having to tell you that. Taking an unfair advantage includes actions that technically fall within the rules but gave you an unfair advantage over classmates, such as getting yourself excused from class to postpone a test you were supposed to take.

Q. I'm not sure whether I should ask you for a recommendation. What do you think?

A. Most students only need 2 teacher recommendations. If you are not sure which teachers to ask, talk to me individually, and I'll be happy to give you some advice on this question. Guidance counselors are another good source of advice on this issue.

Q. Why do you only send confidential letters directly to the colleges?

A. There are two reasons. First, letters sent through the LHS Registrar go into a file that can be examined by the student, and this creates a situation that can be abused: students have been known to request letters from a large number of teachers, screen them, and only send the most favorable ones. I want to protect my letter writing time so that I can spend it on students who are definitely going to use my letters. Second, some admissions offices may attach more credibility to positive comments in a letter that was written and sent confidentially.

Q. Now I'm nervous. Can't I see what you're writing about me? How do I know it will be positive?

A. I only agree to write a recommendation if I know I can write a positive letter that will be supportive of your applications. If this is not the case, I'll advise you that you might be better off to seek a recommendation from someone else. But that happens quite rarely.

Any more questions?

If you have any questions or uncertainties, talk to me in person at school, or feel free to e-mail me (dhaupt@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us or "Dea Haupt" from FirstClass) anytime.