



What is a Brag Sheet?

Recently, I met with a student who was confused about what to put in a “brag sheet.” He had asked one of his teachers to write him a letter of recommendation for his college applications and she had sent him a questionnaire to complete— a form sometimes referred to as a “brag sheet.” He commented, “This is so hard since I am not a braggy person!” I quickly realized that it was the colloquial name of this form that was causing the confusion and re-framed it as more of a “highlight sheet,” which helped!

Teachers use forms like these to add details and richness to their letters of recommendation. A teacher might know that you excelled or struggled with the material, they will know how you performed on tests and whether you did your homework, but beyond that, they might not have a lot of information. A compelling letter of recommendation needs more than simply a report of how you did in the class, and this is the role of the brag sheet. The teachers might ask about, well, specific highlights or meaningful moments from their class...so, think back...what stands out? Was there a project that you worked on that you were particularly proud of? Was there a lesson or unit that particularly interested you? Was there a topic that inspired you to learn more and keep researching? Did you read a book that you loved so much that you read more by the same author? You can also share examples of where you showed academic growth and effort. So, if you struggled with a concept or did poorly on a test, how did you react? How students react to setbacks can be really informative about character...so, working harder, going for extra help, showing initiative to improve are all positive examples a teacher could share in a letter.

When talking with my student about his time in this teacher’s classroom, he shared that he would occasionally help his classmates with the material, which came easily to him. This was a great detail to share on his form because the teacher might not have known that he loved explaining things and was quietly helping out.

So, if you ask one of your teachers for a letter of recommendation and they send you a brag sheet...think of it as an opportunity to share your highlights. You are making your teacher’s letter writing task much, much easier by providing details or anecdotes about your experience in their class. Being proud of yourself is different than “bragging” and I am confident your teacher will appreciate learning about the highlights you took away from their class. Also, don’t forget to THANK them for writing you a letter of recommendation. Gratitude is another way of demonstrating character and that is why colleges ask for these letters in the first place, to get a sense of the positive qualities you will bring with you to college. Do your part to make your letters shine!