

Letters of recommendation are about your character and skills, not your grades. Recommenders are only supposed to write about direct, first-hand evidence, rather than “hearsay”. So, if you did something great in another class, that generally won’t appear in *my* letter for you.

Dr. Pogo will **not** discuss or mention your letter or numeric grade in a letter of recommendation. Also, he will **not** discuss how “smart” you are in any way, since “smart” is an ambiguous, undefined term. Graduate schools (including medical schools) already know your grades, because you sent them a transcript. And employers generally just don’t care about your grades, unless you got a D or worse in something. And even in those cases, employers mostly just want to hear the story that goes with the bad grade.

Dr. Pogo **will** provide your class rank (in the form “nth out of x students) for every class you took with him in every letter of recommendation, whether or not you were happy with it.

If your class with Dr. Pogo included the possibility of earning “extra credit” in the form of “mileage” on a CAPA based homework system, then your letter **will** include your relative rank for this extra credit, in the form “q was ranked nth out of x students for effort in this class”. The letter will include a separate sentence describing the “mileage” so that readers understand what is meant by “effort” in this context.

Dr. Pogo **wants to** discuss all of the following as much as possible, and will do so to the full extent possible based on his interactions with you. Merely sitting in a class and earning a grade (even an “A”) doesn’t provide enough evidence to write a letter of recommendation.

- Evidence concerning your honesty (or lack thereof).
- Evidence about your response to difficult academic circumstances (e.g., what happened *after* you bombed a test?).
- Evidence about your dependability (including attendance and punctuality).
- Evidence of your tendency towards excellence (do you stop at the minimum?).
- Evidence concerning your selflessness (or selfishness).
- Evidence about your time management (or procrastinating).
- Evidence about your organizational skills (and notebook clarity).
- Evidence about your writing ability (e.g., clarity and professionalism of emails; clarity and completeness of written lab work.)
- Evidence about your speaking ability (e.g., professionalism when asking questions)
- Evidence about your courtesy/politeness to professors.
- Evidence about your courtesy/politeness to your peers.
- Evidence about your motivations. This includes whether you seem to be motivated by excellence, self-improvement, grades, etc.
- Discussions of your use of office hours (Didn’t use them? That’s a sentence! Just wanted answers to homework problems? That’s a sentence!).
- Evidence about your participation in class and in groups (Asked questions in class? Skipped class? Sat in the back? Had your phone available during class?).
- Specific lab and equipment skills (Used a voltmeter. Used an oscilloscope. Can solder. Etc.)
- Evidence about your attitude towards teammates or lab partners.
- Especially in labs, evidence about the manner in which you deal with uncertain or ambiguous results. Do you wait? Do you ask? Do you try things on your own?