

ASKING FOR REFERENCES

Prospective employers utilize the process of checking references as a method to validate your skills and abilities for a particular position. The employer contacts your references to gain additional insight about your work ethics and capabilities. Employers will vary in the number and type of references they require, as well as when they request you provide reference information.

Enlist references who will be sure to present your most positive skills and qualifications.

BASIC GUIDELINES

- Early in your college career, identify individuals you can use as references. Get to know your professors, advisors, and supervisors. Furthermore, allow them to know you. Impress them!
- Do not offer anyone's name as a reference unless you have that person's permission to do so.
- Your potential list of professional references should include a balance of employer and academic references. Use caution in the use of personal references (i.e. family members).
- Plan to enlist three to five references. If you are applying for several different positions, you may need to select which references best support your abilities for a specific position.
- Do not ask someone to serve as a reference if you are not confident in their ability to provide a positive reference in a timely manner.
- Do not list references on your resume. It is not necessary to include the line "References Available upon Request" at the bottom of the resume. Employers know that you will supply a list of references upon request. Unless specifically requested by the employer, do not send the reference page with the resume. Instead, take it along with you to the interview should it be requested.
- Create a separate sheet entitled, "References." Print it on the same high-quality paper as your resume and cover letter. Use the same letterhead and font used for those documents. It is important to remain consistent.
- For each reference listed on your "References" document, include their full name, title, organization with which the individual is affiliated, complete mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- Be aware that some employers have a policy of not giving references. They may confirm dates of employment, but otherwise be unwilling to comment about a former or current employee for legal reasons. Be sure to find this out ahead of time and you can decide whether or not it would be beneficial to list them on your "References" page.

ASKING SOMEONE TO BE YOUR REFERENCE

- Ask for permission and tell the person why you would like them to serve as one of your references. Emphasize how the individual knows about your skills and abilities.
- Generally, your references will be contacted by phone or sent a form to complete. You usually do not need your references to write a letter for you unless stated by the employer.
- If you are required to supply letters from your references, tell them when you need the reference. Allow enough time for them to write the letter of recommendation, preferably at least 2 weeks. It can be appropriate to ask if they would like for you to write the letter for them as to not take up additional time in their schedules. You may need letters of recommendation at the time you apply for a position, or they may be requested at a later time during the application process. If you are asking the individual to mail a letter of recommendation, provide a self-addressed and stamped envelope. If it is via e-mail, provide the correct email address.

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- Provide your references with a job description of the target job and how you feel you meet or exceed that criteria. Make sure they know what you desire from the recommendation. For example, you may find it helpful that one reference give insight to your communication skills while another one would speak to your technical skills.
- Always thank your references. A definite word of thanks or a written thank you note is the correct follow-up. Keep your references up to date through your job search process about your abilities.
- Be sure to let them know the outcome and if you continue in the job search process.