

REFERENCES

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Five tips to help you make the most of your references

After hours and hours of searching for positions, focusing your resume, and scoring an interview, you are still not done. Potential employers often want an outside opinion on your work habits, skills, and qualifications. In your last stretch of the application process, be sure your references do not shut the door on your chances for employment.

Choose the best 3-6 references

Select people who can speak about the skills that are relevant to the job. Good choices may include: former or current supervisors, co-workers, customers, vendors, colleagues, coaches, mentors, and professors. Less impressive references may be an advisor, or other more personal contacts. Tailor your reference list for each job, similar to how you tailor your resume for each position.

Ask for permission

Before including someone as a reference, ask for their permission. Occasionally, someone will tell you they may not be the best reference. Wouldn't you rather know this before the employer called them? This will also give them a heads up that they will be receiving a phone call. If necessary, remind your references to focus on: how they know you, the time frame of your

relationship, and positive qualities they will remember about you.

Sending a copy of your resume may also be helpful. Ask how they prefer to be contacted, and include all contact information they are willing to provide. For example, provide the person's name, title, organization, and two ways to contact them (phone number and email address being the most popular.)

Provide a reference list when asked

A reference list should be prepared ahead of time, and provided *after* the employer has asked for references, or toward the end of the interview process. Have your references on a separate sheet of paper, with the same header as your resume and cover letter. Check for typos as one wrong digit or letter could prevent them from being contacted.

Keep references up-to-date on your job search

As appropriate, keep your references up to date on you job search. They are often excited to hear of your successes, and it is polite to let them know when and from whom they might receive a call.

Properly thank references

Thank your references at the end of your job search. Although a handwritten note is usually best, a personalized email is also an acceptable way to say thank you.