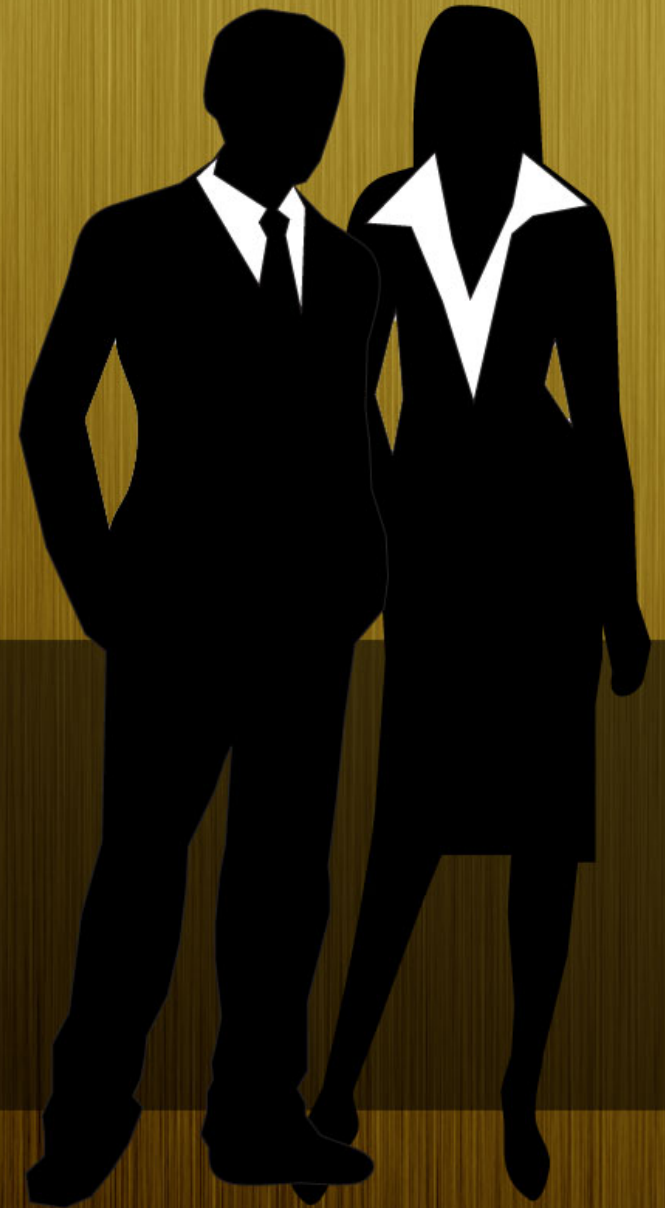


Gathering Employment References

Preparing for the Workforce



What is a Reference?

At some point during your job search, a potential employer will request references and conduct a reference check. Typically, it will be after an interview, when the company is seriously interested in you as a potential hire.

A reference is someone who can answer questions about your work history, skills, abilities, and work style, and can serve as a final confirmation of your positive on-the-job performance.

A positive endorsement can help you clinch a job offer, and a negative reference can hurt your chances. Therefore, be sure to have a strong list of references who know all about your strengths, and about the jobs you are applying for.



What types of References are Important?

There are 4 types of References:

- ❖ Employment- these include past employers, co-workers, subordinates, or clients. They can speak about your specific employment or volunteer experience.*
- ❖ Professional- these are people who know you on a professional basis. They may include contacts from business and sales, clubs, or professional or community organizations.*



References (cont.)

- ❖ *Academic- these are instructors and vocational counselors. They can speak about your academic activities. These are most appropriate for current students or recent graduates.*
- ❖ *Personal- these are people who know you personally and can describe your skills. Only use this type of reference if you do not have the other types. Use the names of people who can tell an employer you can be depended on to do a good job.*



How Do You Choose a Reference?

- ✓ *Select people who honestly know you and will speak objectively. Choose people who have known you for a minimum of three months, though the longer they have known and worked with you the better.*
- ✓ *References should NOT be family, friends, or peers.*
- ✓ *Avoid references that may be controversial or may concern the employer. This includes clergy, counselors, or social workers, unless they are relevant to the job.*
- ✓ *Do not choose people who are not well versed on your background and accomplishments.*



Choosing a Reference

Often a potential employer will request a list of 3-5 people you have worked with as references.

If you must choose between several people who know you well, select those who witnessed you in positions most related to the prospective job.

It takes a bit of time and preparation to gather a list of strong references. It's a good idea to plan and get your references in order before you need them. It will save time scrambling to put together a list at the last minute.



Prepare Your References in Advance

- ✓ *Always ask permission from your references BEFORE you use their names. Ask if they are willing to provide a strong, supportive recommendation.*
- ✓ *Make sure you have current contact information (i.e., name, position, organization, email, and phone number).*
- ✓ *Ascertain if they are available via phone or email during your critical search time.*
- ✓ *Prepare them in advance by sharing your current resume and cover letter, and the position description.*
- ✓ *Be sure to thank your references after the selection process is complete; it is always best to maintain a strong, ongoing, and professional relationship.*



Getting the Best References

- ✓ **Ask the Right People-** Only ask people who you know will give you a positive reference. Also, try to ask people who are reliable. You want to know your references will respond to employers on time. Find out how they prefer to be contacted and best times they can be reached.
- ✓ **Be Aware of Company Referral Policies-** Some employers will not provide references due to concerns about litigation, they might only provide your job title, dates of employment, and salary history. If that's the case, try to find alternative reference writers who are willing to speak to your qualifications.
- ✓ **Request a Reference When You Change Jobs-** Before you leave, ask your supervisor (and perhaps one or two coworkers) if he or she will serve as a reference for you in the future. That way, you can create a list of references from people you may not necessarily be able to track down later.
- ✓ **Maintain Contact with your Reference Network-** If you are fresh in their minds, they will be more likely to give you more specific, and more positive, recommendations.



Submitting References

You will need to bring at least one copy of your reference list to your interview. Some employers may ask for it before the interview.

If an employer does not ask by the end of the interview, you should ask them if they would like your reference information.

Create a consistent and professional application packet; your list of references should have the same font, format, and paper choices as those used for your resume and cover letter.



When a Reference Letter is Required

There are some applications that may require a letter of recommendation (i.e., fellowships, scholarships, jobs and/or internship programs).

Follow the processes already discussed about how to identify, prepare, and thank your letter writing references.

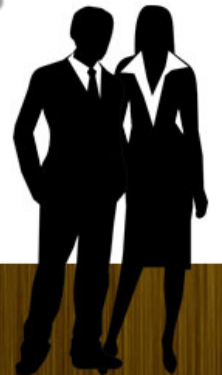
Formally ask your references via phone, email, or an in-person meeting, giving them enough time to allow them to write a letter.



Additional Considerations

Remember—a reference can be asked about your performance, skills and abilities. They may also be asked about your interpersonal skills, leadership qualities, communication style, conflict resolution capacity, decision-making, and whether you have a clear understanding of your field of study or a specific type of work.

Any inconsistencies between what you say about yourself in an interview and a reference's responses could eliminate you from consideration for the position.



Reference Format

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