

About 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 to provide reference information.

Enlist references who will be sure to present your best attributes and abilities. When you ask someone if they would be a reference for you, it is appropriate to ask them if they could serve as a positive reference.

Basic Guidelines

- Early in your college career, identify individuals you can use as references. Get to know your professors and advisors. 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 (aka your Mom).
- 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 his/her ability to give a positive reference in a timely manner.
- If you are currently employed, do not use your current employer on your list of references. Your current employer should serve as a confirmation of your abilities at the time of an employment offer. Your other references will speak to your past performance.
- Do not list references on your résumé. It is not necessary to include the line "References Available on Request" at the bottom of the résumé. Employers know that you will supply a list of references upon request. Do not send the reference page with your résumé unless requested to do so. 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 résumé and cover letter. Use the same letterhead and font used for those documents. It is important to be consistent.