



## Why get references.

Hiring and training involves time and money, so employers want to find out as much as they can before they commit to anyone.

And this is where a reference comes in. References are contacts that both support and validate your résumé. Their written or oral feedback produces a more thorough overview of you as a candidate.

Usually, references are acquaintances, faculty, and/or former employers. To strengthen your pool of potential references, get to know your faculty and be sure they know you.

Recruiters want to find out if you are who you say you are on your résumé and if you'll be a capable employee. Questions they may ask can include the extent and duration of acquaintance with you; your work skills, ethics, attendance, and reliability; how well you handle pressure; your strengths/weaknesses, character; communication and team skills; salary; reason for leaving; and more.

Some may question the validity of references that are biased in your favor, but most employers check references to varying degrees, depending on the job. Employers for temporary or part-time jobs check references less often than those in banking or government, who often perform background checks that detail work history, military career, and criminal record.

## References: The Importance of a Name

*Guidelines for acquiring references.*

### Two basic types.

References usually come in two forms: employment and character.

Employment references are more formal and confirm your work experience and abilities. These references are usually objective. Some organizations limit references to start and end dates of employment, and salary. This minimizes potential discrimination suits in the event of a no-hire. As a new graduate, you may not have extensive references from former employers. Often, written references are used for educational purposes.

Character references focus much more on who you are as a person, including your personality, traits, and values. These references are intended to make you look good and get you hired, so they may be from faculty, counselors, mentors, community leaders, internships, and volunteer work. Avoid relatives.

Both types of references confirm your skills and capabilities, and whether you can work well in a team setting.

### Basic pointers.

Start with the following:

- Expect to provide three to five real references – never make up names.
- Choose references sensibly. Make sure you'll receive nothing but good feedback. Be prepared for no's; and if there's any uncertainty, ask someone else.
- Get consent before including a reference. Otherwise, notify them

### Simply put:

When gathering references, keep these tips in mind:

- Never list references on your résumé – only provide names when requested.
- Always obtain permission to include references and avoid relatives.
- Select references wisely – you want only positive references.
- THANK your references with a note or e-mail.

ASAP that they may be contacted.

- Provide copies of your résumé and job details to references so they can write and/or speak knowledgeably to the recruiter.
- Never list references on your résumé – always separately on paper that matches your cover letter and résumé. Include your name at the top.
- Verify spelling and contact details: full name, title, company address, phone (day/evening/cell), e-mail.
- Having current references is ideal, but going back five years is acceptable.
- Always remember to thank your reference with a note and/or e-mail – it's both professional and courteous.

Keep in mind that employers can speak with anyone at any time, even people not on your reference list. They may, however, contact current instructors and employers only with your permission.

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