



Ready Reference E-11

Professional References

Prospective employers utilize the process of checking references as a method to validate your skills and abilities for a particular position. The employer's goal when contacting one of your references is to gain some additional insight about your work ethics and capabilities. Your job in obtaining references is to make sure your references present the very best about your attributes and abilities. Employers will vary in their requirements regarding the number and type of references you provide, as well as when they request reference information.

Basic Guidelines

- Identify potential individuals to use as a reference early in your college career. Get to know your professors and advisors and let them get 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 if considering using personal references.
- Plan to acquire three to five references. If you are applying for several different positions you may need to select which references best support your abilities for the position you are applying.
- Do not ask someone to serve as a reference for you 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. Let your other references get you to this point.
- Do not list references on your résumé. It is not necessary to include the line "References Available on Request" at the bottom of your résumé. It is understood that you will supply a list of references upon request. Do not send the reference page with your résumé unless requested to do so.
- Create a separate sheet entitled "References." Print it on the same high quality papers your résumé and cover letter. Use the same letter head used for those documents.

Reference Request Checklist

- Ask for permission. For example, "Would you be willing to serve as a reference for me as I pursue my job search?"
- Tell the person why you want him/her to be one of your references. Emphasize what the individual knows about your skills and abilities.
- Tell him/her what career path you are pursuing and what information you feel would be valuable to share with a prospective employer. Provide a copy of your resume.
- In most cases, your references will be contacted by phone or will be sent a form to complete. It is usually not necessary for the reference to write a letter for you.
- If you are required to supply letters from your reference, tell them when you need the reference. Give adequate time to write a letter of recommendation, preferably two weeks. 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 employment process. If you are asking the individual to mail a letter of recommendation, be sure to provide a self-addressed envelope or a correct email address.

- When possible, provide your reference contact with a description of the job you are applying for and how you feel you meet or exceed that criteria. Make sure he/she knows what you expect from the recommendation. For example, insight into your professional growth in a certain area.
- Thank your references. A definite word of thanks or a written note is the correct follow-up. Keep them posted throughout your employment process. A call from a prospective employer should not be a surprise to any of your references. It should be expected so they are adequately prepared to respond with facts and specific examples about your abilities. Be sure to let them know your final destination or whether you are still active in the job search process.
- Make sure your references know if you have had a name change since your affiliation with them.

Reference Page Guidelines

- Make sure contact information for each reference is correct
- Use a separate page for references
- Use the same format as your resume

Sample:

References

1. Name of Reference
Position
Company Affiliation
Company Address
Business Phone and Extension
Email Address

2. Name of Reference
Position
Company Affiliation
Company Address
Business Phone and Extension
Email Address

3. Name of Reference
Position
Company Affiliation
Company Address
Business Phone and Extension
Email Address

Another Way to Use References

If you are in the final rounds of an interview process and references have not been contacted at this point, ask one of your references to contact the prospective employer on your behalf to validate your qualifications for the position.