


Reference Writing Guide

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 Career Development Center

What Are References?

The term “reference” refers to a person who knows you and may be asked to discuss your experience, skills, background, and work ethic. In general, employers seek professional references (faculty/advisors, former supervisors, staff involved in your leadership activities).

Employers want to ensure that the individuals they hire have the necessary skills to perform the job and have the experience stated on the resume. As a result, employers are placing greater emphasis on checking references provided by the prospective employee. References can help identify poor performers before they are hired, and two or three references can have a profound effect in impressing an employer.

How references are used.

References are an integral part of the hiring process, and reference checks often take place through a phone conversation between the employer and the reference. References may be requested as part of completing the employment application or as a separate list as part of the interviewing process. Most employers will eventually request your references before extending a job offer.

Employers typically ask for references after an interview, so be sure to take a copy of your reference page with you to your interviews.

Employers ask references questions to find out more about the applicant in the areas of:

- Skills and Abilities
- Knowledge
- Academic Performance
- Leadership
- Drive
- Teamwork
- Ethics and Integrity
- Commitment and Work Ethic



NOTE:

References **DO NOT** go on a Resume.
A separate document is to be used.

Finding References

*Your reference list should include three to five individuals who have agreed to be a reference for you.

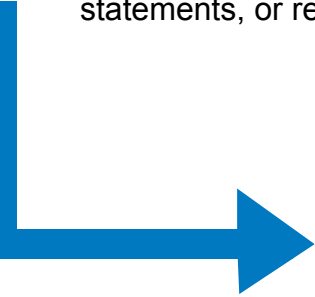
Guidelines for Choosing References

- Ask in advance.
- Ask individuals who will provide honest and candid recommendations.
- Request references only of those people who will provide positive recommendations.
- **Select professional references:**
An immediate supervisor, manager, or co-worker.
The higher the title, the better.
- Your reference should know who you are and what you did.
- Faculty references are more meaningful when based upon their personal knowledge of your abilities and performance, as generated through a mutual interest or shared academic or learning activity.
- Other potential references may include leaders of organizations or clubs, or customers.
- Don't use family members or friends unless they can truly speak to your work-related skills and qualifications.
- Unless requested, do not select friends to serve as "character" references.

How to Use References

You want to be certain that your references are aware of your accomplishments so that they can better discuss the work you've done in the context of your career goals. You should provide each reference with:

- A current resume
- A job description (if available)
- Information regarding your expectations for this particular reference (focus on work/project performance, skills, communication abilities, leadership)
- Your career goals: the types of jobs you are pursuing, the industries and fields of interest, and the type of companies you are seeking
- Other background information, like transcripts, autobiographies, personal statements, or research papers



After providing this information, prepare your references before their first phone call from an employer. **Be tactful**, but basically, you want your references to confirm with enthusiasm and completely accurate detail the important achievements that you use on your resume and in your interviews. Be sure that you both agree on the facts.

It is also critical that you communicate with your references regarding progress during your job search and that you call or email your references if you know they may be contacted. Tell them when you have given out the reference page, give them a copy of the job description, and explain how you are a good candidate for the job.

Always follow up with your references when you have accepted the position. Send them a thank you letter telling them about your new job.

Format

The Basics:

- List references on a separate page and not on the same page as your resume.
- Head your reference page just like your resume
- The page should include 3-5 references
- The following information should listed:

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- Name of reference
 - Title
 - Name of company
 - Address
 - Phone number
 - Email address
 - Relationship to you, e.g., supervisor, colleague, professor, etc.

Since this is a **separate** page apart from your resume, give this page the heading **“References”**. You should list three to five references under that heading. Be sure to include your name and contact information at the top of the page, just as it appears on your resume and make sure you ask the reference what contact information they want listed.

Use the same paper as your resume, and as with any other job search correspondence, take the time to make sure your reference page is of the highest quality.

Sample Reference Page

Anita Job

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REFERENCES

Dr. Roberta Reference, Assistant Professor
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Leader for my volunteer work with troubled teens.

Ms. Sue R. Visor, Co-op Supervisor
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Supervisor of co-op position.

