



References

What is a reference?

A reference is someone who can provide an interviewer or prospective employer with information regarding your strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, you want to give them names of people who will concentrate more on your strengths and less on your weaknesses!

Choosing Your References

The resume and cover letter are your chance to tell the employer how wonderful you are. And if they impress the employer, you'll get a chance to say even more about all your great qualities.

But at some point the employer is going to want to find out how other people feel about your abilities and personal qualities. They'll ask you to supply them with a list of references to whom they can talk about such things as your past work experience, your education, and your personal traits that you would make you the right person for the job.

Who can you use as a reference?

There are three types of references you can use:

1. **Work Reference:** This is usually a person who has been your supervisor. This could be through paid employment or through volunteer work. The more recent your involvement with the employer, the better. An interviewer will question why you are not using previous employers as a reference.
2. **Academic Reference:** This should be a teacher or instructor who has known you for some time. This type of reference is able to provide information about you which could reflect how well you would do on a job.
3. **Personal or Character Reference:** This should be an adult who is able to vouch for your good character and discuss your desirable personality traits.

Employers prefer to see work or academic references if possible. These are people who have seen you work or who have taught you and who know what skills you have, your work or study habits, and how well you can adapt to new situations.

Personal references should be used only if you are applying for your first job or have very limited work experience.

Who should you choose as a reference?

Now that you know what types of people you can use as reference, how do you choose three or four?

You will want to choose those who you feel are best qualified to comment on your abilities, skills, work habits, etc. and who will comment on all these qualities in a favourable way.

Once you have chosen the people you want to act as references, make sure you ask them if they are willing to do so. Also, ask them if they will provide a positive reference!

It's a good idea to keep your references informed about your job search. Give each reference a copy of your resume so they will be better prepared to receive inquiries from employers.

What kind of questions will employers ask a reference?

Knowing what type of questions employers are likely to ask can help you decide who you want to use a reference. Here are some of the more common questions references are asked.

1. How long did he/she work for you?
2. What was the quality of his/her work?
3. How much responsibility did he/she have?
4. How did he/she get along with people?
5. Did he/she require close supervision?
6. Was he/she prompt?
7. Why did he/she leave your company?
8. Do you know of anything that would qualify him/her for the job we're considering hiring him/her for?
9. Can you think of anything I should know about him/her that I haven't asked about?

What information should you provide about your references?

Appropriate information to provide is as follows:

Name
Position or Title
Company
City, Province
Work Telephone Number

What should a list of references look like?

Check out the following page for a sample format!

MARY APPLICANT

1234 Employment Drive
Victoria, BC V8T 1C2
(250) 123-4567

R E F E R E N C E S

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Judi Jacobs
Manager
XYZ Machine Shop
Victoria, BC
Business: (250) 456-7890

ACADEMIC

Mr. Eric Emde
Teacher
Victoria High School
Victoria, BC
Business: (250) 388-5456

PERSONAL

Mr. Edward Nell
Retired Accountant
Victoria, BC
Residence: (250) 987-6543