

Employment References

Typically when an employer is seriously interested in you as a potential hire, the employer will ask you to provide a list of *employment references*. This is a document that contains contact information of professional contacts who can attest to the skills and qualifications that you have for the job you are applying for. Select and prepare your references carefully, so they can provide the support you need and communicate your fit with potential employers.

How to Get Started

1. Consider asking former bosses, co-workers, customers, vendors, and colleagues to be a reference. If you're just starting out in the workforce, you can ask college professors. Or, if you haven't worked in a while you can ask people who know you personally and can speak to your character, skills and attributes.
2. Ask permission from each person that you would like to use them as a reference and give that person a quick update as to your status and what you are trying to achieve. Discuss briefly what they might share with a potential employer and that it conveys a positive impression of you.
3. Keep contact information up-to-date for your references.
4. Provide complete information on your reference document. This information should include dates, names, places of employment (if applicable), full address, complete phone number, how long they have known you, and in what capacity.
5. Choose your references appropriately for the job you are applying for. Make sure the reference you have supplied can verify work skills that are similar to those being requested by that particular employer.
6. Do not include reference information when applying unless it is requested. The one exception to this is if you have a "superstar" letter of recommendation that pertains to the specific position you are applying for.
7. Always have reference information available at an interview in case you are asked to supply it.

Professional References

1. When providing a previous employer as a reference, know the company policy and be sure to indicate if the company policy is to provide dates only. This will let the potential employer know what to expect.
2. Be aware that some employers will not provide references. Due to concerns about litigation, they will only provide job title, dates of employment, and salary history.
3. Do not provide a former employer if you are certain that they *will not* provide a favorable reference. Instead, if there is a former coworker who can provide a positive reference, try contacting that person and asking them to be a reference.
4. It is also acceptable to use colleagues and professional peers as references.
5. Try to obtain "Letters of Reference" from employers as you depart that company. With the ever-changing business world, it may be hard to track down contacts in the future. Better to get the letter while their experience with you is still fresh.

Personal References

1. As with business referrals, always check with each person to ensure a positive, response will be given.
2. Your personal references should be familiar with your situation and the type of information that will be requested; and they should know to present this information in a **professional** manner.

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