

References

Employers typically check your references right before they make you an offer or if they are deciding between you and another candidate. Sometimes they will make an offer contingent upon checking your references and transcripts. References can either make or break the deal, so it is important to give your references a lot of thought and attention.

Preparing References

- Select **three to five** professional references to provide the employer. The individuals you select should be able to discuss your work abilities. These individuals may include supervisors, professors, coaches, customers, or people you worked for on volunteer or community projects.
- Always **ask permission** before giving someone's name out as a reference. Send them a copy of your resume and explain your career objective or positions you're applying to. Check back in with them periodically, especially if it has been a long time since you first asked them to be a reference.
- Choose references that are really going to sing your praises. **Choose energetic, positive people** who are good communicators. If you have any doubt about what someone might say about you, do not use them.
- Prepare your references. If an employer has asked for a list of references, **call each reference** and let them know who will be calling them. Let them know why you are interested in the position and what strengths and accomplishments you have emphasized to the employer.
- Create a **separate reference sheet** that matches your resume font and format.
- Verify that all contact information for your references is current. Include their name, title, address, phone, and email, as well as their affiliation (for example: "**Affiliation: Former Supervisor**").
- List references in **order of preference**. Employers may start at the top and go down the list.
- Finally, always remember to **let your references know** when and where you have accepted a position, and thank them for helping you in the job search process.

Whom to ask

Whom you ask to be a reference depends upon the position you are applying for. You may want to ask different contacts to act as a reference for different jobs. For example, if you are looking to do education advocacy abroad, consider listing a professor with that background who you have worked or studied with in the past. Overall, aim for a balance of professional, academic, and even personal contacts.

Sample References List

Create a separate reference sheet for your professional references. Choose references that can speak to your strengths and who are going to sing your praises. Don't forget to thank your references and let them know as soon as you land that great job!

George M. Student

202 Maxwell Hall | Syracuse, NY 13244 | gmax@syr.edu | 315.443.5453

Professional References

Jennifer Citizen
Executive Director
Otto Foundation
e: jcitizen@otto.com
p: 315.443.4444
Affiliation: Former Supervisor

Joseph Public
Program Coordinator
Office of Government Relations
College University
e: jpublic@college.edu
p: 518.558.5888
Affiliation: Former Internship Supervisor

Amy Teacher, PhD.
Associate Professor
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
Syracuse University
e: 315.443.1000
p: ateach@syr.edu
Affiliation: Current Faculty Member

Match the heading on your references list to the one on your resume.

Requests for professional references are ideally from former work supervisors, but others may include professors, organizations you have volunteered or interned for, and coaches.

You must ask permission to list someone as your reference before you add them. Follow up periodically with your references during your job search to keep them updated.

In addition to the reference's name, title, organization, and contact information, you may also include an affiliation statement, highlighting how you know them.

Employers will usually let you know before they call your references. Contact your reference to let them know to expect the call and tell them about the position.