

Career Resource: Your References

Selecting references is a critical part of job search success. Here are a few suggestions on choosing and using references to your greatest advantage.

Reference Questions

References are used to help determine a candidate's potential and fit with the company's culture. The following are typical questions your references might be asked:

- How would you describe [candidate's] professional style?
- What was [candidate's] major contribution to the organization?
- Why did [candidate] leave your company?
- What are [candidate's] strengths? Weaknesses?
- What transferable skills can [candidate] bring to this position?
- What type of management style would best fit with [candidate's] approach?

Selecting Your References

Choose people who know you well and can speak knowledgeably about your professional and personal attributes. Strive for a balanced group of people, such as a recent/current employer, a long-time professional contact and a colleague or co-worker.

Reference Etiquette

If you haven't spoken to a potential reference in a while, get in touch face-to-face or over the phone. This is your chance to demonstrate that you've grown beyond their expectations. Help your references help you by:

- Providing them with as many details as possible about your current job search. Give them a copy of your resume, explain why you left or are leaving your current position and tell them why you would like to use them as a reference.
- Contacting your references each time you give out their names. Keep them updated on your job search progress. Ask them to contact you each time they are called.
- Sending a letter or card to your references to thank them when you've accepted a position.

Your Reference List

Set up your page of references on the same type of paper as your resume and cover letter. Provide your name, address, phone and email information at the top in the same format and font as your resume. Include the following information for each reference:

- Name
- Position
- Company
- Address
- Office phone
- Home phone
- Email address
- Relationship
- Notes (Mention any specific achievement or skill that this person could discuss)

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