

# ALL ABOUT REFERENCES

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Your references are people who know you, generally from a work, volunteer or educational setting, who can comment on your skills, personal qualities and work ethic to a prospective supervisor. You should usually provide the names of three to four references on your résumé, or provide them during the interview.

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## Who can be a reference?

### References can include:

- + former or present supervisors
- + professors, teaching assistants, teachers, lab instructors
- + coaches, volunteer supervisors, mentors
- + colleagues who can speak to your abilities

### References should NOT include:

- + relatives
- + friends

## How many references should you include?

It's a good idea to include the names of three to four people who can be references for you.

## What about permission?

ALWAYS ask permission of your references to use their names on your reference list. You may also want to ask them what they would say about you if someone called to do a reference check.

## What information do you need to include about references?

For each reference include their name, position title, organization, phone number, email address and location. If your reference has changed jobs since you worked together, indicate how your reference knows you (e.g., "former supervisor").

## What's the best way to provide references?

You can either include your references at the end of your résumé, or indicate "References are available on request" and provide them on a separate sheet during your interview. It's often more efficient to include your references on your résumé, as you'll have one less document to provide during your interview. It may also enhance your credibility if one of your references is well known in your field. However, you may prefer not to include your references on your résumé if you don't want to circulate your references' contact information too widely, or if you don't want your current employer to be contacted until you have decided you would accept the position if you are offered it.

## When are references contacted?

Your prospective supervisor will usually contact your references after you have completed a successful interview and the supervisor wishes to learn more about you and your work history. This could be immediately following your interview, or several days after the interview.

## What type of questions will your reference be asked?

This depends on the employer, but usually the questions will relate to your past responsibilities, work ethic, professional behaviour, skills and dependability. E.g.,

- + What kind of work did \_\_\_\_\_ do for your organization?
- + This will be a busy position with multiple demands and changing priorities. Describe how \_\_\_\_\_ has worked under similar conditions.
- + Is \_\_\_\_\_ able to organize his or her work effectively to meet deadlines?
- + Does \_\_\_\_\_ generally arrive at work on time? Were there excessive absences?
- + Would you rehire \_\_\_\_\_ if you had the opportunity?

Make sure you know what your references might say about you before you include their name and contact information.

## Are references the same thing as reference letters?

No, reference letters do not replace a personal connection. Employers usually prefer to make direct contact with your references. It's important to keep in contact with your previous employers, even if they change jobs or retire, as prospective employers will still wish to speak with them. In some cases, your reference may prefer to write a reference letter.