

REFERENCES AS A RESOURCE

References are an important component of the job search process. Most employers will request either a list of references or recommendation letters. Therefore, it is important to choose your references wisely. A wrong choice could spell disaster for the likelihood of getting the job offer.

Choosing your References

It is no longer necessary to include names of references or state "references available upon request" on your resume. However, you should begin to make a list of possible references at the beginning of the job search. Pick people who know your work as an employee, student, or volunteer.

Do not use personal friends or family members as references. Instead, ask former supervisors, professors, or clients who have first-hand knowledge of your experience, skills, and accomplishments. Make sure they will be able to say nice things about you and can attest to your qualifications.

Never give the name of a reference without asking them beforehand. If they agree to be a good reference for you, make sure to fill them in on the jobs you are seeking. Give each a copy of your resume so that they are informed of your work and school history.

Drafting the List

Your list of references should include three to five people who can be contacted, by telephone or in writing, to speak on your behalf. Type up the list with your name, address, and telephone number at the top. Following your contact information, center a heading entitled "References." List each reference by name, title, address, and telephone number. If the connection to your reference is not obvious, add a line briefly

stating the relationship (i.e., former supervisor).

Print the list on the same high-quality bond paper as your resume. Take it with you on interviews in case an interviewer asks for references. (See the reverse side for an example.)

Recommendation Letters

Letters from references stating your achievements and qualifications can be used in lieu of a list of references. It is always a good idea to have both in place when going on an interview.

Give the people from whom you are requesting a letter a list of points you would like them to make. Remind them of ways in which you distinguished yourself as an employee or student along with personal qualifications or skills you would like them to address in the letter.

Let the writer know what the letter is going to be used for (i.e., job search or graduate school application) so that the document will reflect the goals you are attempting to achieve.

Don't wait until the last minute to request letters of recommendation. Sometimes it may be unavoidable, but, whenever possible, give the writer plenty of advance notice.