



Choosing and preparing references

Make no mistake, selecting and priming the right references is a crucial aspect of a successful job search. In most cases they can have a major impact on the final hiring decision. You should arrange to include a

minimum of three solid individuals, and the listing on your resume should be concise, with only the essentials, including name, professional title or position, and basic contact information.

Who to ask

Include individuals who:

- know how to reflect credibility and professionalism
- are certain to supply a glowing report.
- have occupied authority positions, such as board members, former bosses, or high-level associates
- can provide specifics regarding your performance

Exclude anyone who displays even the slightest hesitation when asked. Even a hint of apprehension is a red flag, signaling the potential for something less than the wonderful affirmation you need.

When to ask

While you may prefer to avoid approaching them until there is a possibility they will be needed, every reference should be personally contacted and asked for permission to be listed in advance of being contacted as a professional courtesy.

In the event they are contacted before anticipated, you should reach out to them and

apologize profusely. Make it clear that you were unaware that it would be done in advance of notifying you of your candidacy and you had no way to know it would happen.

Workplace colleagues are best asked before rather than after you leave a position.

How to ask

Unless your search has been narrowed down to one district or a position requires references specific to its position, it is best to make the request general in nature. At the same time you need to be clear about your expectations; for example, "In the near future I may be applying for a new position. Would you consider being listed as one of my references?"

Proper preparation involves more than obtaining permission; it entails positioning them to be as effective as possible and enlisting them in your cause.

Send them each a copy of your updated resume, or deliver copies in person and use the opportunity to tell them about the job and why it is right for you. Give them some idea as to what you expect to be covered in the interview based on what you have learned about the district because it may help them form responses in advance.

Finally, ask them if they would be so kind as to let you know if they are contacted.

What will be asked

It is reasonable to expect that your references will be asked to describe your competencies and your attitude, what he or she would consider your weaknesses, and how you relate to colleagues, employees and stakeholders. One of the most common questions used today is whether the reference would hire you.