



### WHY ASK FOR A REFERENCE?

You aced the interview, they've called and ... now they want your references. Quick! What do you do?

A reference is a letter or written recommendation from a person who knows you and your work ethic, skill or capacity. This person needs to be in a position of standing where they are expected to have knowledge of your capability. The person who recommends you is called your referee or your reference.

There are good ways, and not so good ways, to ask someone for a reference that will help you to land that job. Here are the goods.

### WHAT?

Ask someone for a reference in a way that impresses them with your professionalism, gets you a glowing reference, and gets you the job.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

**You will need:**

- The job advertisement and any key selection criteria
- Your CV, plus any responses you gave to the selection criteria
- Email or phone contact details of a potential referee (the person who will recommend you)

### WHAT TO DO:

**01**

**Get your referee list together.** On paper or in a digital file, write down the names of everyone who might be able to serve as your referee or referees (often you need two). Look at each name on your list and think about these questions. Your referees do not necessarily need to be a direct line manager, but they do need to have knowledge of your approach to work.

Give someone's name a tick each time you answer 'Yes' to one of these questions:

- Is this person in a position that is relevant? (e.g. Team leader, Year Captain, Teacher, Minister, Rabbi or Priest, Group Leader, Manager)
- Has this person directly seen my work and would they speak from personal experience about my reliability and work ethic?
- Will they remember me? (It can often be a couple of years since you worked together.)
- Do they think positively of me, my work and my approach?
- Will they reliably follow through and submit the reference?

## WHAT TO DO CONT:

- Does their position reflect or is it similar in some way to the person or organisation I am applying to? (For example, if you are applying for an apprenticeship as a carpenter, your woodworking teacher is much more relevant than your English teacher as a referee.)

02

**Approach your top hits.** Based on those who scored top of the list, give them a phone call, send an email or speak to them in person. All you need to say is that you're shortlisted for a role or job, and you would really like them to be a referee. Ask if that would be possible.

03

**Give them the key details.** Here's the step lots of people miss, and doing this will put you ahead. If someone says that they will be your referee or provide a reference, send them a written list of key information, including the following:

- Job title that you have applied for, and organisation it's with.
- Name of the HR officer or person in charge of hiring – if known.
- The dates when you worked for your referee (they won't necessarily remember these if it was a year or more ago), for example – 'My time as Marketing trainee at ABC Tools was January 2019 to October 2020.'
- The key selection criteria – in simple bullet points. For example, 'They have stressed the need for accuracy and dependability in this role.'
- Any gentle reminders of particularly impressive projects. 'I thought our work together on the DET Tools proposal really displayed initiative, detailed work and proved my dependability.' You're not telling them what to say but you are making it easy for them to use evidence to back up their recommendation of you.
- It may be useful to send them your CV or resume. (Optional)

04

**Confirm their contact details.** It will be your responsibility to provide their contact details to the employer, and the date by which you need to do this may be tight. Ask your referee to confirm that you have the right or preferred contact details (email and phone number). Confirm their title. Provide these details to the employer or HR representative: Name and title (of referee), phone number, email address. Sometimes this information has to be provided up front on a job application: sometimes it is requested after interviews.

05

**What if they say no?** Some organisations do not allow their employees or certain employees to make references. If someone declines, don't take it personally. It may have nothing to do with you. That's why you make a list of lots of people, so that you have more options to go to.

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### GOT IT?

➤ You know who to ask for a reference, you have the information ready to provide to them. They're ready and willing to do it in a timely fashion that sings your praises and gets you the job.



## TRY THIS

If you feel like you've nailed it but you want to level up, try this:

- Know and get approval from your references before you apply for a big job.
- Send your referee a thank you letter letting them know how it went – it's very frustrating to do someone a favour (write a reference) and never hear how it went.
- Connect to your referees on LinkedIn or similar professional networking sites. They are the beginning of your formal professional network – treat them like gold!

## SO WHAT?

- Great references really make a difference in hiring decisions, and the people who refer you need to be able to do the best for you without spending too much time looking for evidence or information to support their argument that you're great!

## WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- ☐ Gather a list of names of potential referees
- ☐ Collect the basic details of the job and key selection criteria into a draft email ready to send to contacts who say yes.



## IF YOU LIKED THIS ONE YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY...

- How to Make a Business Phone Call
- How to Avoid Identity Fraud
- How to Talk to People You Don't Know
- How to Find a Mentor