



References 101

Top 4 things to consider when choosing a referee:

- 1** How well do they know me? Do they know about the work I did?
- 2** Are they WILLING and enthusiastic? How positively will they be able to talk about me?
- 3** How recently did I work with them?
- 4** How relevant is this to the job that I am applying for?

... How you prioritize your references will change from situation to situation – use your judgment.

**When asking for a reference, always explicitly ask if they are comfortable doing so and confirm that they know you well enough to provide a POSITIVE recommendation.*

Who to ask?

You get to choose! Ask someone who...

- ...has supervised you in a paid or unpaid environment.
- ...knows *how* you work (Think: attitude, flexibility, punctuality, etc.).
- ...knows *what kind* of work you have done.

***Note: You can use another student as a reference if they were supervising you, but avoid personal references unless asked specifically for personal references. (ie, your roommate/mother/best friend/roommate's mother's best friend, etc.)**

How do I ask?

For an academic reference:

- ...Be professional when asking: book an appointment with the professor or attend their office hours
- ...Tell them about your academic goals, where you're applying, what type of program you're applying for, etc.
- ...Make sure they have relevant information that will help them write the letter. For example, your CV or resume, personal/research statement, examples of academic/relevant work you did in their class
- ...Ask them well in advance so that they have time to prepare.

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...Consider providing them with stamped and addressed envelopes so that it's easy for them to submit the required letters/forms to support you

For a work reference:

...Tell them about your job hunt, where you're applying, what type of job you're applying for, etc.

...Make sure they have relevant information such as your job description, resume, examples of work you did – especially if it's been a long time since you worked with them.

...Ask them well in advance so that they have time to prepare.

Remember:

... Put your best reference at the top!

...Employers usually only call references when they are ready to make an offer. Generally, if they can't reach the first person on the list, they will keep moving down the list until they speak to somebody.

...Most employers ask for 3 references, but have a couple extra prepared, just in case.

How do I keep in touch with referees?

...It's good to contact referees about twice a year, via the method with which you are most comfortable. Let them know what's going on with you, and inform them whenever there is any change in your situation.

...Be sure to follow up with a thank you note, whether or not you were successful at achieving the goal for which the reference was used.

...Keep a list of different contacts that you could use as references (academic, employment, volunteer, extra-curricular, personal), including information that they know about you, and why they would be a good reference.

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