

How to write a Reference letter – useful tips

Who should serve as your references?

In selecting people to ask to serve as references for you, **think about what those individuals know about you and if they can discuss your work-related qualities.**

✓ **Consider:**

Past and present employers usually know about such things as your honesty and integrity, reliability, initiative, quickness to learn and take on responsibility, and your ability to work with others. This type of information is valuable, even if your employment was not career-related.

Faculty members may know about your academic ability, productivity, and timeliness, honesty and integrity, and perhaps have observed how you work with others.

Advisors and coaches may also be aware of information about you that could be relevant to a potential employer — such as honesty and integrity, maturity, initiative, interpersonal skills or leadership qualities.

Don't list references who only know you in a social capacity. While family friends may have nice things to say about you, employers don't place value on these kinds of references. Obviously you **do not** want to offer as a reference someone who would not speak about you in positive terms or who doesn't know you well enough to give a strong reference. Get permission from your references.

Give each person who agrees to serve as a **reference** for you a copy of your resume (or vita). This lets your references know about your interests, abilities and experiences.

Thank each reference in writing for his/her assistance.

When to give your reference list to a prospective employer?

Provide reference information **when you are asked** to provide it. Generally do not send reference information with your resume unless it has been specifically requested.

✓ **For each reference person**, include full name, title, organization with which the person is affiliated, complete address, phone number and e-mail address.

- ✓ **Salutations prior to names:** A person with a medical, Ph.D. or other doctoral-level degree is addressed as "Dr. (name)" regardless of gender. Persons who do not hold a doctoral or medical degree are addressed as "Mr." or "Ms." (Marital status, reflected by "Miss" and "Mrs." are irrelevant to business and professional communication.) **While it is not required to place "Mr." or "Ms." before a person's name on a reference list, it can be helpful,** especially if a person's gender is not obvious from the name (not uncommon).

- ✓ Make absolutely sure you **spell your references' names correctly.**

- ✓ Your name and contact information should be at the **heading** of the page — just like it appears on your resume.