



Frequently asked Questions Regarding References from Career Directors International

1. Why do I need to provide references for an employer?

The employer wants to make sure you will be a good fit for their organization. They want to hear what others have to say about previous performance.

- Dr. G. Jay Christensen / CSU-Northridge

Up to 45% of employers check references, so it is necessary to be prepared to be asked for them. Offering them at the end of the interview is proactive and demonstrates you are confident about your skills and relationships.

- Laura DeCarlo / CDI President

2. Who makes a good reference?

Appropriate references are usually previous bosses, supervisors, employers or leaders of volunteer organizations for which you are affiliated. If this limits you, consider customers, vendors, professors, and/or professional colleagues from networking, professional or community organizations. Select only individuals who will give a positive, professional reference. If you have doubts, it is best not to use someone.

- Laura DeCarlo / CDI President

3. How many references do I need?

Typically, you will be required to provide three (3) business references and possible one (1) or two (2) personal references, excluding family members.

- Cory Edwards / Partnering for Success

Never exceed six (6) references unless specifically requested to do so; this is overkill.

- Laura DeCarlo / CDI President

4. What types of information do I list?

You should include the reference's contact name and job title, company name and address, email address and telephone number. You might also consider including a brief description of the your working relationship with the reference if this is not clear.

- Rosemarie Ginsberg / Creative Staffing Associates

Not all references want to be contacted at the office and some never want to give out their personal contact information. Your first goal is to include the reference's work address and work phone number. However, be sensitive to an individual's desire to use home information if desired. Also, if the person travels extensively, an alternate cell phone number would be a good idea.

If the individual has left the company or retired, in the job title line put "former" or "retired". Example: "Steve Jones, Former Director of Engineering" or "Martha Miller, CEO - Retired"

Note: Never list contact information on references on the Internet without their express permission due to potential issues with identity theft.

- *Laura DeCarlo / CDI President*

5. Should I list references directly on my resume?

References do not belong on the resume. In a rare occasion an employer may request references be included or it might enhance the value of your candidacy with the industry recognition of reference names. The best idea is to create a separate sheet of paper on matching letterhead to your resume and cover letter.

- *Laura DeCarlo / CDI President*

6. Should I list "References Available Upon Request" on resume?

Adding that statement has become unnecessary and passé. Certainly, if you are asked for references you are going to provide them. As the nature of resume writing has evolved, the "References Available Upon Request" statement has been dropped.

- *James Walker / Resource Consultants Inc.*

7. What if I was fired from my last job? Do I need to list that employer as a reference?

Not necessarily. Most job applications specifically ask if they can contact a former employer as a reference. Proactively supplying your references puts the power in your hands to seek out the best person for the reference. Is there another manager in the company that you had a good relationship with? Or perhaps a manager who had left the company who would make a good reference? You might also turn to a co-worker or former client who was pleased with your work and who will vouch for your success at that particular company.

As Dr. G. Jay Christensen of California State University Northridge states, "We can't make everyone happy in this world."

8. When do I send references?

That depends on the industry. References are usually brought with you to the interview and the majority of career agents and human resource professionals agree that they should only be provided when requested. However, in some fields, such as broadcasting, many decision makers say they prefer that the references be included in the package with resume and cover letter, and won't even consider an applicant without seeing them in advance. Find out what works best for your career and act accordingly.

- *Susan Geary / 1st Rate Resumes*

9. What if I can't find all of my previous supervisors?

If you make a point of staying in contact with your references, and also securing letters of recommendation when you leave a job, this won't be a problem. However, if you find yourself out of touch and unable to locate a reference you can still verify your employment. You should still try to provide the requisite number of references using colleagues and alternatives, but you can also give your prospective employer W-2's (from your tax records) as proof of employment.

10. Do I need to ask permission to use someone as a reference?

It is a courtesy and very wise to ask permission of those individuals whom you wish to use as references. You don't want people calling your references without giving them a "heads-up." It is hard to sound informed and knowledgeable when you receive a "surprise" call.

- Susan Geary / 1st Rate Resumes

11. Someone once suggested that I send a copy of my resume to all my references. Why should I do that?

It allows your references to see what you are up to. Plus, it puts them on the same page as the person who will be calling them for the reference. It provides a memory tool for the reference, and is also great for networking as well.

- Laurie J. Roy / Former PRWRA President

12. What if I don't have any prior experience?

Consider people you have worked with in the past to achieve a common goal such as in volunteer efforts, fundraisers, school projects, etc. If you led a team of students in a project that earned an "A", ask your fellow students if they would be willing to act as a reference and describe the project to a Hiring Recruiter. College professors and community leaders are also a good choice..

- Dr. G. Jay Christensen / CSU-Northridge

13. Should I include letters of commendation?

At an interview for client/customer service jobs, it is often a good idea to have a list of, or copies of, client/customer commendations ready to present. This information could be a copy of the letter of commendation, a printout of the email, or selected remarks in an appraisal. If you have this information, consider mentioning it in your CV/résumé in the profile or accomplishment section.

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