

Checklist for Asking Someone to Serve as a Reference

Ask for permission. For example, "Would you be willing to serve as a positive reference for me as I begin my job search?"

Tell the person why you would like them to serve as one of your references. Emphasize how the individual knows about your skills and abilities.

Tell them what career path you are pursuing and what information you feel would be valuable to share with a potential employer. Give them a copy of your resume.

Generally, your references will be contacted by phone or sent a form to complete. You usually do not need your references to write a letter for you unless stated by the employer.

If you are required to supply letters from your references, tell them when you need the reference. Allow enough time for them to write the letter of recommendation, preferably at least 2 weeks. It can be appropriate to ask if they would like for you to write the letter for them as to not take up additional time in their schedules. You may need letters of recommendation at the time you apply for a position, or they may be requested at a later time during the application process. If you are asking the individual to mail a letter of recommendation, provide a self-addressed and stamped envelope. If it is via e-mail, provide the correct email address.

When possible, provide your references with a job description of the target job and how you feel you meet or exceed that criteria. Make sure they know what you desire from the recommendation. For example, you may find it helpful that one reference give insight to your communication skills while another one would speak to your technical skills.

Always thank your references. A definite word of thanks or a written thank you note is the correct follow-up. Keep your references up to date through your job search process. A call from a prospective employer should be a surprise to any reference. It should be expected so they are adequately prepared to respond with facts and specific examples about your abilities. Be sure to let them know the outcome and if you continue in the job search process.

Make sure to inform your references if and when you have a name change since your affiliation with them.