

References: Who Should I Use and When Do I Give Them?

Preparing your references is a crucial part of your job search and you should have them ready before your first interview. Picking your references requires more than choosing three or four people who can talk about your past work history. It requires choosing people who are credible within their professions, are respected in the community, are willing to speak on your behalf and most importantly will be available to take the reference call.

Your references can make or break your chances for being selected for the job opportunity, so it pays to choose carefully. Suitable references include current and former colleagues, former supervisors, teachers, professors or instructors and individuals that you have worked with in other capacities, such as volunteer projects and organizations.

Once you have identified the individuals you would like to use as your references, it is important to follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have the individual's permission to use them as a reference
- Talk to your references first and make sure they have a clear picture of the type positions you will be applying for
- Inform them of your career goals
- Outline the characteristics you want them to highlight should they be contacted by a potential employer, and then ask them if they agree
- Remind them of instances that exemplify these desirable traits
- If your prospective reference has any hesitancy about being a reference for you, do not use them
- Ask them the best time and means for people to contact them, so you can provide this to prospective employers
- Keep them informed of each time that you use them as a reference and who may be calling them

When should I provide my references?

DO NOT include your references when sending your resume unless the job posting or the individual specifically asked you to include them. Take a copy of your references with you to the interview. The interviewer will either ask for them or have you leave them with your application. In many cases, your references will be called directly from your application, but always have a copy of your references with you in case they are requested.