

Tips for References

When do you need a list of references?

Potential employers commonly ask for a list of references whom they might contact (usually by phone) before or after interviewing you.

Be sure you have such a list at hand when you go to an interview or when you need to fill out an application for employment.

How many people do you need to serve as references?

You should have three to five people on your list.

Always ask these people if it is okay to list them as references.

If you can, tell them the type(s) of position you are applying for and the skills and personal characteristics that are being sought.

Whom should you ask?

People who know you personally, either through your courses, your extracurricular activities or your paid work or internships.

People who preferably know you in a context that is appropriate to the job to which you are applying. For research positions, you would typically ask professors with whom you have worked; for most other jobs, ask your work or internship supervisors, and for extracurricular activities ask your advisor. Utilizing a **mix** of people who know you in different contexts is generally best.

People who are willing to say good things about you! If you're not sure, ASK. Be straightforward: "These are the skills my potential employers are looking for. Do you feel that you know me well enough to say positive things about me in these areas?" A less-than-positive recommendation can kill your chances at a job.

How should you format your list?

On a separate page, list three to five people; their work addresses and phone numbers (add e-mail addresses if you have those available); and their relationship to you ("supervisor at summer job," "thesis advisor," "professor in Asian history seminar," etc.).

At the top of the page, write "References for (your name)".