

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH
Office of Career Services

For employment opportunities.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

References and letters of recommendation are essential parts of any application process. Typically, references will be requested for most employment opportunities, while letters of recommendation will be needed for academic pursuits such as graduate or professional school. However, there are always exceptions to the rule, so be sure to always carefully read the application directions.

REFERENCES

- Three to five people who can speak to your abilities
- Know you in professional capacity
- Always ask permission before listing as a reference
- Provide them with job posting and application materials

WHO

- Past manager
- Internship supervisor
- Volunteer coordinators
- Colleagues
- Faculty members
- Coach
- Avoid family members, roommates, friends

TIMING

- Provide when employer asks for them
- Always bring copy of your references to an interview
- Alert references when list requested

FORMAT

- Reference sheet should be separate document
- Format header same as other applications pieces
- Format each reference the same way using bold and italics
- Include name, title, organization, work address, office phone number, and email address
- List in order of relevance or alphabetical

Lucy Johnson

476 E. Fender Lane, Bloomington, IN 47408
johnsonl@gmail.com • (555) 555-5555

REFERENCES

William Darcy

Body Fitness, Owner
3498 Sports Ln.
Minneapolis, MN 55409
(555)555-5555
wdarchy@bodyfit.com

Sophie McCarthy

YMCA, Director
997 E. Main St.
Bloomington, IN 47403
(555)555-5555
sophiem@ymca.net

Tyler Willis

Town Gym, Vice President
229 Tulip St.
Indianapolis, IN
(555)555-5555
willis_ty@towngym.com

REFERENCE TIP

Be sure to thank your references at the end of your job/internship search!

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

For graduate school and beyond.

Letters of recommendation are traditionally used in the academic application processes, but there are many employers and internship providers who ask for letters of recommendation as well. Again, be sure to read the application instructions to know whether you are being asked to provide a reference list or letters of recommendation.

WHO TO ASK

If you are applying for admission to an academic program, for an academic position, or scholarship/grant award, you will want to be sure that the majority of your letter writers are academics themselves, ideally in the field of interest to you. They should be professors you have built a strong relationship with either through taking classes with them or acting as their research assistant. It is also beneficial to include a professional reference that can speak to your abilities in a work environment. This could be a past supervisor or boss.

HOW TO ASK

It is important to always politely ask for a letter of recommendation well ahead of the application deadline. It is extremely unprofessional to request a letter at the last minute. Be sure to give the letter writer at least two weeks to complete the letter for you. It is also imperative that you provide each of your letter writers with adequate information for them to provide you with the strongest letter possible. If you are applying for a graduate or professional program, put together folders for each of your letter writers with information about each of the programs you will be submitting their letters to along with a copy of your resume and the related deadlines you need the letter(s) completed by. If you will be using the letter for a job or internship, you need to provide your letter writer with your resume, the job description, and some information regarding your interest in the position and organization.

FOLLOW-UP

Be sure to send each of your letter writers a thank you note at the end of the submission process. You will also want to inform them when you have news to share about the position or admissions process. Recommenders always love to hear that you got into the program you were applying to or that you got the job you were shooting for. By keeping up with them you are also strengthening your professional network for the future.