

Wanda Job

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REFERENCES

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Ms. Jane Doe

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Dr. Peter Professor

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A QuickRef Guide to REFERENCES

While the line “References Available upon Request” is NOT necessary (it’s a given), it is important to have a reference list that you can provide to prospective employers who ask for it. Employers usually ask for references once you are under serious consideration for a job. It is important to provide a list of people who will be able to speak well of you and the quality of your work.

Before using someone as a reference, be sure you request permission. Be sure to discuss the types of positions for which you are applying and provide a copy of your resume for their review. Good choices for references include former supervisors, co-workers, customers, vendors, colleagues, college professors, and club or organization advisors. It is best to avoid character or personal references, unless specifically asked for them. Family and friends aren’t usually considered objective or credible.

Some employers, usually the Human Resources departments, have a policy in which they will not provide references but will only verify employment – job title, dates, maybe salary.

Your references should not be listed on your resume. Create a separate reference list that includes each person’s name, title, address, phone number and email address. It is also a good idea to include that person’s relationship to you. Be sure the information you list is correct. If an employer cannot reach your references, s/he may not consider you further for the job!

Many employers aren’t necessarily interested in seeing reference letters, but it doesn’t hurt to have them, especially if you are a college student, you are relocating, or your company is going out of business. It’s a good idea to ask when you change jobs, so you can build a file. More often, a prospective employer will want to speak with a reference over the telephone to ask specific questions, and more and more often they want to contact references via email to coordinate a time to speak.

Many academic programs request reference letters as part of the application process, and usually there is a form you must sign that requires you to decide whether or not to waive your right to see the recommendation. As you make your decision, remember that confidential recommendations often hold more weight with admission committees as those letters are perceived as being more honest, and many faculty will not write reference letters unless they are confidential. Other faculty will provide you with a copy of the letter, even if it is confidential. If you have questions or concerns, always discuss with your references.

Stay in touch with your references throughout your job search process. When you have an interview that seems especially promising, call or email to let them know who might be calling. Once you accept a job offer, let your references know, and be sure to thank them in writing for the help they’ve provided with your job search. Stay in touch so that they become part of your long-term network.

A sample reference list is available on the reverse of this page.