

How to Follow Up With Your References

Typically, employers check references late in the application process, making it one of the close-to-final steps before you find out if you got the job. If you've planned well, you have a reference list ready to share with the potential employer. And, you are also prepared to give your references a heads-up that someone will be reaching out.

That shouldn't be your last point of contact with your reference, however.

A relationship that begins and ends with you asking for a favor is unlikely to flourish. Instead, aim to maintain an active, ongoing relationship with your references, even after they've written letters, filled out forms, or spoken on the phone in support of your candidacy.

Here's more information on how to follow-up with your references throughout your job search, and why it's important.

References Basics

First, a quick review of the basics when it comes to references. Always choose people to act as references who know you well and will speak highly of you. (Here are more tips for choosing people to write letters of recommendation.)

Ask first: Before passing along someone's name and contact information for the first time, check if the person is willing to be your reference. This gives references a chance to politely decline. That's a better option than a reference that can only discuss your work vaguely, or worse, shares negative feedback.

Do you have to give references a heads-up every time you share their name and contact information? Absolutely not. You don't want to become a pest—if you got permission to put someone down as a reference in March, assume it extends forward to April, May, and June as well. Get in touch with your references when you hit the moment where employers will be making contact with them.

Seize the opportunity to share the job posting, your resume, and any information on points you'd like your reference to mention or highlight.

One exception: If it's been several years since someone first agreed to be your reference, reach out and check to see if the person is still comfortable being a reference for you.

Always Keep References Up-to-Date on Your Job Search

Your email or phone call before a potential employer reaches out to references should not be your last point of contact. Along with letting references know you're hunting for a job, you should also share updates on your job search progress.

Think about it: Being a reference isn't easy. Whether the company has references answer written questions or gives them a call, it'll take up their time. A really good reference will likely do some work beforehand, too, reviewing the job listing and thinking about their time working with you.

After all that effort, it's only reasonable that a reference will want to know the outcome of your job search. So, once you hear the news about a job, don't leave your references hanging. Give them a call or send an email letting them know if you got the job or didn't, and if you did get an offer, let them know if you accepted it.

Make Sure to Say Thank You

Job searching is full of thank-you notes. You send a note after phone interviews, in-person interviews, and to anyone that helps you during your job search. References are no exception.

When someone gives you a reference, make sure to say thanks. You should send a thank you every single time someone acts as a reference. It can be as simple and fast as a short, sincere email. A handwritten note is also an option.

When you do land a job, many people choose to give references a small token present. Typical options are flowers, a bottle of wine, a gift card, or food. While giving a gift isn't required, it can really help send the message that you appreciate your reference. Review sample letters to help get a sense of how to say thanks for a reference or letter of recommendation.

Keep the Relationship Ongoing

How can any relationship flourish if one person is always giving and the other person is the relationship is always taking? A few ways to make sure the relationship feels even and your reference doesn't feel taken advantage of:

Say thanks: As mentioned above, sending a note of appreciation is an easy yet significant way to let your reference know you value their time.

Offer to reciprocate: Is your reference also on the job market? Let your reference know you're always willing and happy to reciprocate, and be a reference yourself.

Keep in touch: Do you only email your reference when you're job hunting? That's a bad habit. Send occasional notes to keep your reference up-to-date on your career and life. If it makes sense for your relationship, get together occasionally for coffee dates, or just like your reference's latest post on LinkedIn, Instagram or Facebook.

Credit: <https://www.thebalance.com>