

Are Your References Ready?

One of the most common forms of background check performed by companies hiring new employees is the reference check. They typically request that candidates provide them with three names of previous bosses. If you don't have three former bosses, then provide co-workers, teachers, college professors and/or professional colleagues as character references.

The first thing you should do is develop your list of potential references and then contact each one. Explain that you're applying for a job, describe the type of work and the company, and ask if they would feel comfortable giving you a good recommendation. If they have any hesitation, do not include them as a reference. Your goal is to have three strong references who can help you land the job.

Be sure to verify their contact information.

Don't list these references on your resume, but have them handy during an interview. Put the names, titles, phone numbers, mailing addresses and email addresses of your references on a single sheet of paper and take it to your interview.

After the interview, if this seems like a job you'd enjoy, go ahead and hand them this list of references along with any other "leave-behind" materials that are appropriate, such as a portfolio with samples of your work (this depends on the type of job, of course).

Here's a step most people forget -- after you land the job, contact your references, tell them what happened, and thank them for their help!

Bonnie Lowe, Author of "Job Interview Success System"

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