

References & Recommendations



Alumni & Career Services

(804) 289-8547 | careerservices.richmond.edu

Office Hours: M-F, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Drop-in Hours: M-F, 2 to 4 p.m.

Employment, graduate programs and fellowships are some of the few areas where you may need professional or academic references. A professional or academic reference is typically a current or former employer, a colleague, a client, a vendor, a supervisor or faculty member who can recommend you for employment or an academic program. Usually an employer will ask you for a list of 3-5 references, while a graduate program will ask you to have someone fill out a recommendation form or write a letter of recommendation on your behalf.

Letters of Recommendation/Written References

So that you can select the best person to write a letter of recommendation for you, consider the following sample recommendation form. How would your selected recommender answer these questions?

Please rate the applicant on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 represents "exceptional" and 1 represents "weak") for the following qualities. Please describe the applicant in terms of the following qualities (provide examples, if possible):

1. Initiative/Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
2. Work ethic	1	2	3	4	5
3. Positive attitude	1	2	3	4	5
4. Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
5. Creativity/Originality	1	2	3	4	5
6. Leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5
7. Cooperativeness	1	2	3	4	5
8. Punctuality	1	2	3	4	5
9. Dependability	1	2	3	4	5
10. Adaptability	1	2	3	4	5
11. Judgment	1	2	3	4	5
12. Productivity	1	2	3	4	5
13. Work Quality	1	2	3	4	5

1. Based on your observation of or experience with the candidate, comment on their ability to communicate competently and clearly in English, orally and in writing. If relevant, comment on specific situations where you have observed the candidate's communication skills (e.g., classroom presentations, coursework, co-curricular activities, etc.).
2. Based on your observation, describe how the candidate works in unstructured or ambiguous situations. Feel free to give a specific example.
3. Comment on how the candidate might interact with students, faculty and, community leaders, among others, in an unfamiliar situation or different cultural environment. Feel free to describe a situation where you have observed the candidate in these circumstances. What kind of impression, in your view, would the candidate make as a representative to our organization?
4. Please provide specific information about this person's experience and goals, relating them to why you think they would provide particularly valuable insights.

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Employment References

- Create a references page, separate from your résumé, to list 3-5 references. If you are printing your references page, use résumé paper. You want your cover letter, résumé, references and an application (if applicable) all to match.
- ALWAYS ask someone to be a reference ahead of time. Ask that person if they are comfortable giving you a **positive** reference. If a prospective employer calls a reference you haven't requested or notified, they may be caught off guard and ill prepared to speak about your strengths.
- Offer to send an updated copy of your résumé, either in hard copy or via e-mail, to each of your references. By sending them a copy of your résumé, you keep your references up-to-date on your skills and experiences and better prepare them to speak to your abilities.
- Avoid using "character" references like a sports coach from high school, clergy, a parent, or a family friend. These are okay if the organization requests a character reference (Ex: The FBI, the police, law enforcement positions, etc.), but usually organizations want professional references – people who can speak firsthand about your performance at work or in class - supervisors, co-workers, and professors with whom you have a good relationship.
- Thank your references – regardless of whether you get the job, send your references a quick note of thanks for supporting you in your job search process.

Sample References Page

JAMIE T. STUDENT*

28 Westhampton Way | Richmond, VA 23173 | (804) 555-5678 | studentjt@richmond.edu

REFERENCES

** (Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs./Mx.) Name

Title

Organization

Address

(Area Code) Telephone #

E-mail address

***Relationship

** (Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs./Mx.) Name

Title

Organization

Address

(Area Code) Telephone #

E-mail address

***Relationship

** (Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs./Mx.) Name

Title

Organization

Address

Area Code Telephone #

E-mail address

***Relationship

*Use the same header on your references page as you do on your résumé for continuity. If your reference page gets separated from your résumé, the employer has your contact information.

**Always put some sort of descriptor here. There is nothing more embarrassing for a reference checker than insulting the person they are about to have a conversation with. Ex: "Hi, is Ms. Knight there?" "This is DOCTOR Knight." Do your homework and find out if they have their doctorate. Ms. is appropriate and professional for women who do not have doctorates.

***Optional. This gives the person checking your references a feel for who they are about to speak with when calling.

Ex: Ms. Jones supervised me while I worked at #1 Sales Company.

Ex: Dr. Smith taught me Chemistry 101 & Biology 302. He has known me for two years.