

# HOW **2** guide: Professional References

Since over 80% of employers check references, it is likely that prospective employers will ask you for a list of your professional references. Do not put your references on your resume -this should be a separate document, titled "Professional References." And you don't have to put "References Available Upon Request" on your resume. It is understood by most employers.

*Why do employers conduct reference checks?*

- Ensure the consistency of everything stated on your resume and what you have said in the interview
- Obtain feedback that provides a more in-depth picture of you as a candidate, including their perception of your skills, personality, and work performance
- Identify any areas of weakness or concern

*Consequently, these are the only individuals capable of providing this information objectively:*

- Current and former supervisors and colleagues (supervisors preferred)
- Current and former faculty/staff members
- People that may know you from a substantial volunteer experience. (For example, your supervisor at the Humane Society, where you have been volunteering twenty hours a month for the past two years.)

As you can see, friends and relatives are not included on the list since they probably can't speak to your employment performance, and their feedback is not typically considered objective.

**Follow the sample reference entry below:**

Mr. John Smith  
Teller Supervisor  
Everglades Bank  
100 Main St.  
Fort Myers, FL 33988  
Cell: (xxx)xxx-xxxx  
Work: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
Email: jsmith@eb.com

*Relationship: Immediate supervisor for two years at Everglades bank*

**Preparing your list of references:**

- Your list should compromise a minim of three, maximum of five references
- Ask each person if they would be willing to serve as your reference, and be sure they will give you a positive reference. If a person doesn't seem pleased about being a reference, you are probably better not using them. A lukewarm or "I don't know her very well" reference can be damaging.
- Ask them for the phone number in which they prefer to be contacted
- If you know, let them know what kinds of jobs or which companies you are applying to. This can help them customize their feedback toward the job/company.
- Put them in order of strongest to weakest. Your strongest references are typically your current supervisor, individuals who know you well and have the most favorable things to say about you, and people that have know you the longest. Avoid having more than two references from the same place.
- Bring a hard copy on stationary that matches your resume when you go on an interview.

**Once you have obtained the job,** it is professional protocol to send a note or email to all your references letting them know, and thanking them for their help.