



MAKING YOUR REFERENCES WORK FOR YOU

Excellent testimonials from third parties may sway an appointment decision in your favour. So, here are some useful hints and practical advice to help you make the most of your references.

Good references can give you the edge over other candidates, so use them to your advantage by encouraging prospective employers to contact your referees direct. Be sure to brief your referees first to expect calls.

Retain control over your references. They should emphasise your strengths, but be honest about any weaknesses. You need to sure that your references mirror the key points you are making about yourself to an employer. It's always a good idea to send your referees a copy of your CV and to share with them important information such as how you present yourself at interviews and how you account for leaving your previous job. Wherever possible, try to check the references you are given.

Choosing your referees

Obviously you should choose people who will give the best references about your contribution at work and your character. Your prospective employer will probably look for references from your previous employers. Make sure you choose people who will be the most positive and supportive. If there's a possibility of being given a weak reference, warn the interviewer, explain why and suggest other names to contact.

Business contacts including former colleagues, customers or suppliers may also be an excellent source for a glowing reference!

Structuring your references

The ideal reference should cover the following points about you in a positive but concise manner.

- Establish the referee's credibility by explaining their relationship with you
- Emphasise your strengths through their eyes
- Identify any shortcomings or personal limitations
- Agree in advance with your referees what they will say if asked about any weaknesses
- Highlight your accomplishments and contributions
- Describe your personal qualities such as communication, management style etc