

REFERENCE GUIDE

WHAT IS A REFERENCE?

When applying for a position, employers often ask applicants to provide a list of references. **A reference page is separate from your resume** and is not the same as a letter of recommendation. Your reference page should provide the contact information of people who can speak to your strengths and qualifications. References are often used to help discover more about an applicant and to verify the skills and experiences listed on their resume.

As you move throughout your time at the University of Louisville, it is important to cultivate relationships with people who can serve as a reference to your skills, abilities and talents. It is good practice to **have references ready before you begin your job search**. Keeping your current references or potential future references updated is beneficial so you are prepared when the time comes to apply.

Creating a reference page can be simple and worry-free if you have the right tools. The staff at the University Career Center (UCC) are able to help with any questions you might have in regard to professional documents like a reference page. If you would like additional assistance from the UCC, you can make an appointment with your Career Coach via Handshake.

SELECTING A STRONG REFERENCE

Begin your reference selection process by identifying people with whom you have maintained a positive and professional relationship over time. You want to select someone who can speak to your qualifications and traits in relation to the position for which you are applying.

Appropriate choices for a reference include:

- Professor/Teacher
- Coach
- Supervisor/Team Lead/Manager
- Advisor
- Customer/Client
- Former or Current Coworker

It is best to **avoid using family members or friends as references** and stick to professional relationships. Avoid choosing an individual who may be unsure of how to describe your skills and abilities, or might have negative things to say about your attributes. A reference should know who you are and be able to share about specific achievements, tasks, projects or collaborations that are relevant to the desired position. You also want to include references who have worked with you in a variety of contexts. Rather than listing all professors or supervisors, you may consider listing one professor, a supervisor and a former coworker.

If you are unsure about selecting someone as a reference, this may be an indication that they are not the right person to serve as a reference for this opportunity. When listing someone as a reference, be sure to communicate with them beforehand and ensure they are prepared to answer an email or take a phone call.

Questions to Ask When Selecting a Reference:

- Has this person known me for at least six months?
- What opportunities have I had to work directly with this person?
- Can this person provide a reference related to a position for which I am applying?

COMMUNICATING WITH REFERENCES

Once someone has agreed to serve as a reference, it is your responsibility to keep them informed and provide them with information that will help them to serve as a strong reference. Providing your references with detailed information about the opportunity you have applied for, your specific qualifications, and future career goals can help your reference to tailor their response to focus on the most relevant experiences and qualifications directly related to the position.

What to Include When Asking for a Reference:

- Specifics on what projects, classes or interactions you have had which lead you to select them as a reference.
- Provide the resume you used to apply for the position or opportunity and any relevant information, such as a job description.
- Your career goals: the type of jobs you are pursuing, the industries and fields of interest, and type of companies you are seeking.
- Other background information (transcript, autobiographies, personal statements, or research papers).
- If they agree to serve as a reference, keep them informed and updated on the application timeline and when you anticipate they may be contacted and how (via email, phone, etc.).

FORMATTING YOUR REFERENCE PAGE

Remember that a reference page is separate and not to be added to your resume. However it is important to keep the same heading as the one used for your resume. A reference page should have about 3-5 references that you have selected.

References should be listed in the following format:

- Name of reference
- Professional title
- Name of affiliated company or academic institution
- Workplace address (optional)
- Phone number (if provided)
- Email address
- Relationship to you (i.e. professor, manager, co-worker etc.)

Your Name

Appropriate Email Address (should be your Louisville.edu email or "yourname"@gmail.com)
Reliable Phone Number

REFERENCES

Dr. Freda Adler, Associate Professor
Criminal Justice Department
University of Louisville
300 South 3rd Street
Louisville KY 40208
555-555-5555
Profdepartment@louisville.edu

Criminal Justice Professor for two semesters.

The Honorable Amicus Curiae, County Judge
Jefferson County Judicial Center
701 W Jefferson Street
Louisville, KY 40202
555-555-5555
Acuriae@loumetro.org

Internship Manager for 1 year.

Mr. John Holland, Associate Director
University Career Center
University of Louisville
300 South 3rd Street
Louisville KY 40208
555-555-5555
riasec@louisville.edu

Supervisor of Student Assistant Position for 3 years.