

References

Transcript

One question I get asked fairly frequently is whether students need to have a reference list when it comes to co-op interviews. We talked about how on the résumé that you don't need to have "references on request" included – and if we didn't, you don't – but what you do want to have is a list of references, which you will have printed and take with you to the interview.

How many references? What should they look like? Well, you're going to have "references" at the top of your sheet, you're going to have your contact information, and then you can just list three or four... two, if you can only come up with two is okay. At least one should be a previous supervisor if you've worked on a volunteer job or in paid employment at all. Others can be people – but they've really got to know your work. They've got to be able to speak to the skills and abilities and what you did on the job. So personal references like your aunt, who thinks you're the sweetest person who ever lived: not so much. You can think about coaches or professors or high school teachers that you've worked closely on – perhaps you managed a club for them, that kind of thing – that will work fine.

One thing about references though, you've got to keep them up to date, you've got to ask the person whether it's okay to be using them as a reference, and you've got to tune them in so that – should somebody call – they're actually going to be a good reference for you.

In the case of co-op, references rarely get called, but that doesn't mean that you should still not the due diligence because, from time to time – particularly larger employers – they do call references. What I've heard more often, though, from employers, is that they want to see how prepared you are: i.e., that you brought a reference list to the interview, which shows that you are thoughtful and are taking the process seriously.

So, as far as coaching your references, when you call them to ask whether they'll be a reference, let them know the types of jobs that you're applying for, and remind them of some of the things that you have done that you believe that they can talk about which will highlight your skills and accomplishments.