

Gathering References

In addition to your resume and portfolio, you'll find it useful to have some other materials at hand when you prepare to look for work. Having these resources on hand will help make the process faster and easier. In this course, you will explore three materials in particular:

- A basic cover letter that you can tailor for each position you apply to
- An "elevator pitch," which is a short description of who you are and what you're looking for that can be useful in many situations
- A list of references who can vouch for your past experience

All of these will be useful, so it pays to work on them at the beginning of your job-seeking process.

References

Let's begin with references. Many employers will ask you to provide references at some point in the interview process, so it makes sense to collect them ahead of time. This will also give you chance to contact your chosen references to make sure that they are willing to talk to prospective employers on your behalf. You can also gather current contact information and their permission to share that information.

Generally speaking, you will need information from each reference. An example of an information list for a professional reference are:

- Name
- Title
- Company
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- Email address

Be sure to keep a directory of your references with their contact information somewhere you can easily find it.

Professional references

Professional references are people who can comment on your past work history. Usually, they should be managers who worked with you and can discuss what you did at past jobs. Note, however, that some managers are prohibited by company policies from discussing the details of your work and can only verify that you worked at the company and your start and end dates.

Most employers will prefer to talk to your supervisors as professional references, but you can also list:

- Colleagues if they worked closely with you.
- Professors who are familiar with your classwork if you have a short work history.
- People who have supervised or worked with you on a volunteer project.

Personal references

Personal references are people who can talk about your personal character, trustworthiness, honesty, work ethic, and so on. These are rarely needed in modern interviews, but it doesn't hurt to gather some just in case. They should be people who know you well but are not part of your family. As with professional references, gather their contact information and make sure they don't mind being contacted.



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