

Drafting Other Materials

In addition to your resume and portfolio, it's 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 reading, we'll discuss 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

Additionally, we'll talk about a few other tools. 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 a chance to contact your chosen references to make sure that they are willing to talk to prospective employers on your behalf. Do not use references who have not given you permission. You can also gather references' current contact information and their permission to share it.

Generally speaking, you will need from each reference:

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

Example:

Janice Thompson
Development Project Lead
Infinite Square Inc.
1387 West 14th Street, Suite 4
San Mateo, CA 94401
650-477-0822 Available between 3:00 to 5:00 PST
jthompson@infinitesquare.com

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

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 company policy may prohibit some managers from discussing the details of your work and they may only be able to 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 are people who can talk about your personal character, trustworthiness, honesty, work ethic, and so on. You will rarely need these 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 permission to be contacted.

Other application materials

There are a few other documents that may be useful in your job search, which can be useful to prepare ahead of time. Consider lining up some or all of the following materials.

- Online portfolio URL

Verify that the URL is correct and that the link is valid. Check that your work samples are recent and properly documented.

- Work or writing samples

Hiring companies very commonly request work samples. Ensure your work avoids these common errors:

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7

1. * Grammatical mistakes
- 2.
3. * Not showing your work effectively
- 4.
5. * Cliches or overuse of buzzwords
- 6.
7. * Too brief or too lengthy

Copied!

- Letters of recommendation

You can request recommendation letters from former employers or professors. Avoid these errors:

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5

1. * Too vague or generic content
- 2.
3. * Lacking information that validates your work
- 4.
5. * Any letter that expresses reservations, especially if it is not counterbalanced with mentioning more positive qualities

Copied!

- School/college transcripts

Companies often prefer that you request a sealed copy be sent directly to them by the educational institution. If a company requires this, do not provide your own copy of your transcripts.

- Certifications

Certifications include training course completion documents, licenses, and similar professional achievements. Verify these features on all your certifications:

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5

1. * Valid signatures, seals, or logos are present
- 2.
3. * If the certificate includes an expiration date, make sure it is still current
- 4.
5. * Only include relevant certificates that support your academic or experiential qualifications for the job position

Copied!