

References

When employers ask for references, they generally want three to five people to contact about your work or skills. You should list work or school-related, rather than personal, references. Your employers and professors need not be legally-related your first year, but as you proceed through law school, employers will want to hear about your ability to analyze legal issues. The most important attribute in a reference is that they know you well. If you have two choices for references, choose the one most likely to give a convincingly detailed recommendation. For example, someone who worked with you on a daily basis for five years is more helpful than a professor who only knows that you sat in her class and what grade you got. If you do not want your current employer to know you are looking for work, you will need to seek recommendations from others (professors, former clients, judges, etc.).

Be sure to talk to your references before listing them. Make sure they understand your credentials and goals, and ensure that they will give positive information. Mention your accomplishments to the reference, even putting them in writing for the person to have on hand. Ask the potential reference whether he or she would have any reservations about recommending you for a job or if they're comfortable giving you a reference. Gauge, from their response, whether they sound enthusiastic or noncommittal. If they cannot be positive or if they have reservations, don't use them! Also ask about any policies that might prevent a potential reference from saying anything about you. Many businesses now have policies, for example, of doing no more than verifying employment dates of past employees. Perhaps, however, you can see whether your potential reference is willing to go beyond that to an "off the record" endorsement of your work, if asked.

Once you've selected people to act as references, make sure you keep them updated on your search. They will give better recommendations if they know a little about the job you are seeking, and they may want to celebrate with you when you finally land the job. If you know you have an interview coming up, send your references a quick e-mail to alert them that they may be contacted. They may also know something about the employer that they can share with you.

Your references should be listed on a separate page from your resume, on matching paper. Put your contact information at the top, formatted in the same way you have it on your resume. Then list the names down the side of page. Put the name, relation to you (for example: Torts Professor), and the contact information preferred by the reference (phone, address, email, etc.). Here are two examples:

REFERENCES

Glenda Pierce

Associate Dean
University of Nebraska College of Law
PO Box 830902
Lincoln, NE 68583-0902
teverman2@unl.edu
(402)472-2161
**Trial Advocacy Professor*

Bob Smith

Senior Partner
Arnold, Baker and Chester, LLP
123 Baker St.
Lincoln, NE 68500
bsmith@abc.com
(402)432-5432
**Direct Supervisor*