**References**

**Steps of Asking for a Reference:** work with your Job Seeker through the steps of identifying and requesting professional references.

1. Making a list of past experiences
   1. Where has your Job Seeker worked/volunteered in the past?
   2. Who were their supervisors/management at those institutions?
   3. How long was their employment? How long ago was their employment?
2. Making a list of potential references
   1. Look at the Job Seeker’s past employment/volunteer opportunities
   2. Brainstorm people from each opportunity to whom you could reach out
3. Narrowing the search
   1. Cross off any people on your list with whom your Job Seeker has not spoke in over a year.
   2. Cross off any people related to your Job Seeker.
4. Picking the best references
   1. Ask the Job Seeker to review the people left on the list. Thinking back to his/her experience at the position where he/she met the person.
   2. Put a check next to the person if…
      1. The Job Seeker is still in contact with the person in question
      2. The Job Seeker feels that they had a positive relationship with that person
      3. The Job Seeker ended their employment/volunteering on good terms with that person
      4. The person in question works in a field related to the one the Job Seeker will be applying to
   3. Put an X next to the person if…
      1. The Job Seeker had repeated conflicts with the person
      2. The Job Seeker left that job/opportunity on bad terms
      3. The Job Seeker does not feel that the work he/she did with that person is representative of his/her ability
5. Review you list
   1. Cross off any people with an X next to their name.
   2. Rank the people left on the list by the number of check marks next to their name. The check marks should be a rough indicator that they are a good prospect for a reference.
6. Check your work
   1. Talk about the people remaining. Double check that they will be appropriate choices to approach about writing a reference.
7. Be prepared
   1. Know if you need the person to write a letter, or simply answer questions if called by the potential employer.
   2. Find out what kind of information you will need about the reference. Will you need a phone number? Email address? Mailing address?
   3. Begin to think about how you would like to approach each person on your list.
8. Choose your approach
   1. Identify the best means of communication for each person on your list. Some people prefer a phone call, other email, others might prefer to speak to you face-to-face.
9. Asking for the reference
   1. Make sure you are prepared to answer questions about the reference. What is it for? What kind of commitment will the person need to make? What kind of information should the person provide?
   2. Practice asking for a reference a few times before you actually approach the person.
   3. Ask the person for a reference respectfully. Remember that they have no obligation to help you. Ask politely, and accept their answer whether or not they will help you.
   4. If the person says yes, have a paper ready for them that indicates what (if any) steps they will need to take to submit the reference (if it is in writing). If applicable, you should provide any postage necessary to send in the reference.

**Examples and Non-examples:** Read these with the Job Seeker to determine whether they are able to identify appropriate requests for references:

1. Jessica needs a reference for a job at the mall. Three years ago, she worked at a shoe store. She remembers her old boss’ phone number so she lists it as a reference on her job application.
   1. Inappropriate: Jessica should ask before she lists anyone as a reference.
2. Akbar used to work at a clothing store about 6 months ago. He got along well with his boss and coworkers there. He calls his old boss to ask for a reference.
   1. Appropriate: Akbar asked politely and chose a person he knew would provide a good reference.
3. Tom let his old job on bad terms. He was fired for stealing from the office, and getting into fights with his coworkers. He decides to ask his old boss for a reference.
   1. Inappropriate: Tom should not ask people with whom he has fought to be his references.
4. Tanya knows that her family has a lot of good things to say about her, so she lists her mother and cousin as references on her job application.
   1. Inappropriate: Family members are not appropriate references
5. Diego is currently volunteering at his local library. He sets up a meeting with the supervisor and asks her for a reference.
   1. Appropriate: Diego waited for an appropriate time to ask for the reference
6. Jeff isn’t sure who to ask for a reference, so he asks his friend Bill to pretend to be his boss. Diego wants Bill to lie over the phone, and give him a good reference.
   1. Inappropriate: you should only list *real* references
7. Grace calls up her previous supervisor and asks politely for a reference. The supervisor says that she is not comfortable providing the reference. Grace accepts this, and calls someone else.
   1. Appropriate: Grace accepted the supervisor’s answer without hurting his/her feelings
8. Nancy calls an old boss on the phone. When he picks up, she says, “Just so you know, I’m adding you as a reference on my new job application.”
   1. Inappropriate: Nancy should ask for a reference and give the person a choice as to whether or not they would live to give one.
9. Javier asks an old supervisor out to lunch. During the meal, he asks his supervisor to consider being his reference for a job that he wants.
   1. Appropriate: Javier asked the supervisor in person, and did not demand the reference
10. John did great work at his last job. Even though he did well, he was unhappy. One day, he threw a huge temper tantrum in the office and quit, yelling and screaming all the way to the parking lot. John wants to add his old manager as a reference for his new job.
    1. Inappropriate: John did not part with his manager on good terms. He should not ask the manager to provide a recommendation.
11. Lucia had a wonderful time working for a company 6 years ago. She loved her bosses, and they liked her too. She hasn't spoken to them in years. She wants to add them as her references for a new job.
    1. Inappropriate: Lucia no longer has a relationship with these people.