



## **GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING AND CULTIVATING A REFERENCE LIST**

### **What is a reference list?**

---

A reference list is a list of people who will speak on your behalf when interviewing for a particular position.

### **Who do you want to ask to be a reference on your behalf?**

---

You will want to ask someone who has indepth knowledge of your abilities and capabilities and feels comfortable speaking on how you will positively impact the organization. References can include people from past work experiences, internships, professors, community service, advisors, athletics or extracurricular activities.

### **What about family, friends and neighbors as a reference?**

---

Generally, you will want to use professional or educational people as references. These people will be able to highlight your skills and accomplishments related to the position and not just talk about what a great neighbor you were because you brought in their mail. If you work for a family business and your supervisor is a family member, see if there is someone else within the company that could speak to your abilities. If not, a family member is fine.

### **Do you use the same people for every position?**

---

Not necessarily. You need to be very strategic in choosing who you will list as a reference. Different people know your strengths and abilities in different lights. It is important that you fully understand what qualities the organization you are interviewing with requires so you can choose the strongest references.

### **Can I just list anyone?**

---

Definitely NOT! The first rule of reference lists is to ASK the person if they would serve as a reference on your behalf. You don't want to assume that someone will speak on your behalf. There are many reasons why people don't want to do so, so you always want to ask the person if they would serve as a reference.

### **Once a person say's yes...what do I do now?**

---

Provide them with a current copy of your resume, your transcript if necessary, and a copy of the job description or the type of position to which you are applying. This gives your reference an idea of what types of questions they may be asked. You may even want to provide them with some highlights of your experience that are directly related to the position. Make sure you follow up with your reference after the interview to let them know the status as well as send a thank you note.

### **Can I just use them over and over and over again?**

---

It is much more polite when using someone as a reference to always provide them with a heads up when you are listing their name. This gives you the opportunity to check in with the person, network a little, update your status and remind them of some of the things you have accomplished in regards to the position. Being a reference is not a lifelong commitment on their part, so make sure you keep in contact and make sure that listing them is still appropriate.

### **How many references should I have?**

---

As many as you would like. However, companies and organizations generally ask for 3 - 4 references.

### **What is the different between a letter of recommendation and a reference?**

---

A letter of recommendation is a written document composed by someone familiar with your skills and work. The letter should showcase your accomplishments and skills related to the opportunity to which you are applying. The letter writer can send the written recommendation to the potential employer directly or you can include the letter in your application packet. A person serving as a reference is someone who will speak on your behalf via the telephone or via email. A formal letter is not required, however references, may be required to complete short questionnaires on your behalf and send it back to the company. Again do not automatically assume that someone writing a letter on your behalf will be a reference as well. Make sure you ask their permission.

### **What does a reference list look like?**

---

Your reference list should not be included in your resume. Make sure it is a separate document.

Joseph P. Smith  
js000000@wne.edu

Western New England University  
1215 Wilbraham Road – Box XXXX  
Springfield, MA 01119

1000 Side Street  
City, State 00000  
(000) 000-0000

---

## REFERENCE LIST

### **Mr. Sean Burke**

Assistant Director, Career Development for the College of Arts and Sciences  
Western New England University  
1215 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01119  
(413) 782-1564  
[sean.burke@wne.edu](mailto:sean.burke@wne.edu)

### **Mrs. Maria Cokotis**

Assistant Director, Career Development for the College of Business  
Western New England University  
1215 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01119  
(413) 782-1547  
[maria.cokotis@wne.edu](mailto:maria.cokotis@wne.edu)

### **Ms. Andrea St. James**

Director, Career Development Center  
Western New England University  
1215 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01119  
(413) 782-1775  
[andrea.stjames@wne.edu](mailto:andrea.stjames@wne.edu)

---

### **Things to Remember:**

- When creating your reference list always ask your contacts if they would serve as a reference on your behalf.
- Your reference list should not be included on your resume. Make it a separate sheet.
- Do not automatically send out your reference list with your resume. Provide the reference list if the job posting requests one, or if you have been asked to provide one by an interviewer.
- Strategically tailor your reference list to the position which you are applying.
- Remain in contact with the people on your reference list and give them a heads up when you are using them as a reference.
- Follow up with your references to let them know how the interview went and thank them!