

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES guide

During the recruitment process in the U.S., it is common practice for employers to ask for a list of references. The purpose is to verify employment history and to learn more about the candidate by speaking with former employers and supervisors.

Professionals whose work experience has been entirely or mostly outside of the U.S. may find the process of reconnecting with former employers to be a challenge. Here are some recommendations on how to address such challenges while preparing your references list for U.S. employers.



Be prepared

The request for references should be expected. Most employers will ask for 3 professional references from candidates that they are seriously considering for the role, regardless of where in the world the references are based.

Activate your network

As soon as you begin your job search, reach out to your former managers and supervisors. Consider people who can speak positively and knowledgeably about your experience and professionalism. Let them know that you are job searching in the U.S. and ask them if they would vouch for you as a professional reference. Start contacting former colleagues even before you have an interview, in order to get their permission to be used as a reference and to ensure that you have their most up-to-date contact information. Getting back in touch with former colleagues might also lead you to new contacts or referrals for your U.S. job search.

Build your reference list

Because this is a professional reference check, enlist the support of former supervisors that can talk about your responsibilities and achievements. You might include former colleagues who worked closely with you and who can be relied upon to be a positive reference, but some employers prefer to speak with whoever was managing you directly. Don't be afraid to use the names of former employers that reside abroad - if your references are checked, a U.S. employer will usually call or email them no matter where they are. Your reputation as an employee will translate regardless of time or cultural differences.

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Compose your list

At the top, use the same header that you use in your cover letters or resumes, including your name, address, email, and phone number.

Below, list your references and their details:

- Full name
- Position
- Relationship to you (i.e., *Direct Supervisor*)
- Name and address of employer
- Phone number (with international codes)
- Email address
- Skype handle (if applicable)

Make it easy for the employer

When you provide a list of professional references to an employer, you should list the references in the order you would like them to be contacted, with the best, easiest to reach, or most recent contact at the top. Provide the time zone or a specific time window to reach them, as well as their preferred method of contact (email or phone).

Cover all your bases

When the moment comes, check in with your contacts again. Make sure the information is accurate and let your references know that they are likely to be contacted. Share the name of the position and employer that you are interviewing with and, if possible, the name of the person who will be contacting them.

SPECIAL CASES

What if the reference is retired or now works for a different employer?

- List the person's name with their current title and company, then, in brackets, add their former title at your shared employer

What if the company no longer exists?

- Include the name of the employer and, in brackets, mention the year in which the business was closed

What if the reference is unreachable?

- Reach out to the HR Department to find someone who can verify your employment dates and responsibilities at the company

What if the reference does not speak English?

- Enlist the name of a representative as Contact Person (i.e. assistant) who can provide the employer with the necessary information and act as an intermediary during the reference check process

Can I include a personal reference?

- Once you have three professional references confirmed, you may add an additional contact under the separate heading of "Personal Reference" where you can include a career coach, university/school teacher, or work colleague

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sample



Ida Gomez
234 65th St, Apt 2R
Brooklyn, NY 11234
(555) 123 -1234
ida.gomez@email.com

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Filip Adamczak, Director of Housing (Former Supervisor)
Warsaw City Government
Rynek – Ratusz 45-015 Warsaw, Poland
Phone: (01148) 600 771 1960
Email: filip.adamczak@um.warsaw.pl
To schedule, please contact Karolina Broz at: sekretariat@um.warsaw.pl or (01148) 077 11 45 208
Best time to contact: Monday – Friday 9am – 12pm (Eastern Time)

Abel Cloutier, HR Manager (HR Department)
BNP-Paribas Cardif
2 Rue du Port, Nanterre, France
Phone: (01133) 505 514 9484
Email: abel.cloutier@bnpparibas.com (preferred method of contact)
Best time to contact: Monday – Friday 7am – 11am (Eastern Time)

Juan Valdez, Restaurant Manager (Current Supervisor)
Piccolo Cafe
472 W 40th St New York, NY 10018
Phone: (212) 203-1430
Email: jvaldez@gmail.com
Best time to contact: Monday – Friday 4pm – 8pm

PERSONAL REFERENCE

Alexa Ruiz, Professor/Director Graduate Studies (Professor)
New Jersey University
1000 River Rd, Teaneck, NJ 07666
Phone: (201) 982-1212
Email: a_ruiz@nju.edu
Best time to contact: Monday, Thursday, Friday 2pm – 5pm

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES checklist

Proofread your references list. Check for the following:

Contacted **3 or more** potential references

Gained **permission** from references

Confirmed **accuracy** of contact information

Shared information with references, including the position, the employer, and if possible, the name of the person who will contact them

Included references from **different employers**

Included at least one person I have worked with **recently**

Listed references' **relationship** to me

Listed references' preferred **method of contact**

Listed references' **time zone** (if applicable)

Used consistent **formatting** for each reference

Set **font size and type** consistently from top to bottom with a basic font such as Arial, Calibri, or Verdana and size 10 or 12 point for easy reading

Saved with a **clear title** including my name and the job position; for example: *"Ida Gomez_Professional References_Program Manager"*.

