



Guide to Reference Checks

Why Check References?

- Information from references is likely to prove very useful in evaluating a candidate's skills, training, experience, and ability to perform position duties.
- Checking multiple references demonstrates that reasonable care was used in the hiring process.
- Multiple references allow supervisors to look for consistency among comments.

Who Should be a Reference?

- The most useful references generally come from former supervisors.
- Request personal and work references.

What Should be Considered Before a Reference Check?

- Keep the candidate experience in mind when determining when you will collect reference information from candidates.
 - Asking for references at the time of application may deter candidates from applying to your job. Candidates may not feel comfortable providing reference information until they are notified that they are a finalist, or a verbal offer is made.

How to Conduct a Reference Check?

- Dos
 - Provide advanced notice to candidates that you will be checking their references.
 - Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling.
 - Ask whether it is a convenient time to talk.
 - Briefly describe the position the candidate applied for.
 - Confirm the relationship between the person giving the reference and the candidate.
 - Verify basic information such as job title, duties, and dates of employment.
 - Be consistent! Ask the same questions about all final candidates and weigh the information equally; what disqualifies one candidate should disqualify any candidate.
- Don'ts
 - Don't request information about race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or age.
 - Don't ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Be sure that all questions are open-ended and relate directly to the position.
 - Don't ask a reference any questions that you're not permitted to ask the candidate.

Additional Resources:

Reference Check Overview:

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/reference-check-checkup.aspx>

Reference Check Basics:

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/conductingbackgroundinvestigations.aspx>

Reference Check Additional Considerations:

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/creative-compliant-ways-check-references.aspx>





Reference Check Question Guide

Date: _____
Candidate's Name: _____
Reference Check provided by: _____
Organization: _____
Title: _____
Phone Number: _____
Employment Dates: _____

General Reference Questions:

1. What was the nature and length of your relationship with the candidate?
2. What were the candidate's beginning and ending employment dates/positions?
3. What were the candidate's most recent job duties?
4. What balance does the candidate achieve between working independently and checking in with stakeholders and supervisors?
5. What are the candidate's key accomplishments or impacts on the organization?
6. What can you tell me about the quality and quantity of the candidate's work?
7. How would you describe this person's ability to meet deadlines?
8. What kind of supervision did this person require?
9. How well did this person get along with management and peers?
10. In what ways is this person a team player?
11. How would you describe the candidate's overall performance?
12. Would you reemploy this person if you had the opportunity?
13. Is there any more job-related information you would like to add?

Potential Job Specific Questions:

1. How did the candidate demonstrate leadership skills?
2. How does the candidate handle difficult people and work to resolve conflict?
3. Has the candidate mainly served the role of implementer or initiator of projects and proposals?
4. How would you describe this candidate's leadership, managerial, or supervisory skills?
5. Describe the quality of this candidate's written and verbal communication skills.
6. How do you rate this candidate's ability to plan short-term? Long-term?
7. Provide examples in which this person had to make sound and timely decisions. What were the results?
8. Did this person plan and administer a budget? If so, what was the size, and how did this person manage it?
9. How would you describe this candidate's technical skills?
10. How well did this person manage crisis, pressure, or stress?
11. How many people did this person directly supervise, for how long, and what were their levels (professional, administrative, blue collar, technical)?
12. What area of development could the candidate focus on?
13. If you were to offer advice on how best to guide this person, what would it be?
14. Would you hire or want to work with this person again? ____ Yes ____ No (If no, then why?)





Reference Check Form

Date _____

Candidate Name* _____ Employment Dates _____

Person Contacted _____ Title _____

Company _____

Explain the reason for the call and verify the information above

**Note – Candidate Name can be substituted in all places where the form mentions “the candidate”*

1. Please describe the type of work for which (*the candidate*) was responsible.

2. How would you describe (*the candidate's*) work performance and progress?

3. Would you reemploy (*the candidate*)? If no, why not?

4. What are (*the candidate's*) strengths?

5. Where does (*the candidate*) have room for growth?

6. Could you describe how (*the candidate*) worked as part of a team?

7. Please comment on (*the candidate's*):
 - a. Ability to assume responsibility

 - b. Degree of supervision needed

8. Is there additional job-related information you would like to share?

